

THE COURAGE OF THE COWARD

AND OTHER SERMONS

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NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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SECOND EDITION

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 80 Wabash Avenue
Toronto: 25 Richmond St., W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

PREFACE

The sermons contained in this volume are all "morning sermons"—the preacher will understand what the phrase is intended to cover. They are evangelical, but scarcely evangelistic. They are in the main addressed to those who are already more or less closely attached to the Church. They represent, with two exceptions, the preaching of a few months, for they followed each other in almost orderly succession. Hence, amid variety of subject and treatment, there is similarity of mood. For a preacher has his moods like other men, and, if he is wise, he preaches out of the mood of the day and the hour. If he is living a full, well-rounded life there is little danger of monotony, even though the mood holds him through a year of preaching; while, in the course of his life's ministry, he will speak as a living man to living men and women, to their ever varying circumstances and needs.

It will happen that at one time some great fundamental truth of the Christian faith holds the preacher in its grip; and although he has known it and loved it and preached it all his life, yet, while its domination lasts, it dwarfs to his vision truths of equal consequence, and the proclamation of it, for a season, excludes phases of ministry not

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less desirable. Then it will happen that the great outstanding doctrines loom less large for a while, and the preacher longs to speak simple, direct, comforting, affectionate words to his friends, and is satisfied if he feels that he has come close, heart to heart, to the humblest amongst them. This is so much to the good. The great truths have to be proclaimed, one by one, over and over again. The kind and intimate words have to be spoken—and happy the man who can speak them fittingly!

These sermons, whatever other defects they may have, are free from pretence and affectation. They are born of their "mood." They were preached in the months that followed restoration to work after an interruption, through illness, which lasted more than a year. These were days when, after looking death in the face, the preacher had drawn very near to God. And, without wearing his heart upon his sleeve, from Sunday to Sunday he allowed the experience through which he had passed to colour his preaching. He did not pretend that a revelation from heaven had been granted to him which entitled him to pose as the author of a new pocket-gospel for mankind. He only felt a little more sure about the old Gospel which it was his business in the world to preach. He did not dream that no man had ever been ill before him, or that he was the first to discover that there was comfort in Christ! But certain experiences had been his which had led him through dazed wonder to settled peace. So he spoke to his friends, spoke simply, about some of the deepest things in life.

PREFACE

There is, therefore, no screaming in this book, no attitudinising—even though to the superior person there may seem much platitudinising—no straining after effect, and no preaching merely because Sunday has come round again and a preaching of some sort has to be produced. It is quiet speech from a man who has suffered as millions of better men have suffered before him, and has found, as millions have found and may still find, that—absurd as it sounds—one who is no sentimentalist may “take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake”, and that for the reason Paul gives: “when I am weak, then am I strong”.

New York City; July 1, 1907.

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To
My Heroic Wife
To whom
I owe infinite things



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I

THE COURAGE OF THE COWARD

O, friend, never strike sail to a fear! Come into port
greatly, or sail with God the seas.—EMERSON.

I

THE COURAGE OF THE COWARD

"He that doeth the truth cometh to the light."

—JOHN III. 21.

THE worst thing about good people is that they are such cowards. We have all assisted, and more than once, at a meeting which has been a parable of human life. It has been, let us say, a church meeting, a vestry meeting, the business meeting of some committee or political organisation. There is sharp difference of opinion, and, perhaps, some question of principle involved. The discussion becomes unpleasant; bitter things are said; the air is electric. What happens? One by one the best men and women get up and leave the room. The wrong-headed, the selfish, the cantankerous, remain—and carry everything before them! Interrogated as to why they left the meeting in possession of the awkward and stupid people, the really nice people, who ought to have stayed and supported the right, always answer, "Oh, I don't like that sort of meeting. It distresses me too much. I can't bear it." And so the good cause is lost. When we saw this first our souls sickened within us. It seemed to us then, in the days of our strong young manhood, that "a shameful and horrible thing had

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come to pass in the land," and we wondered "what we should do in the end thereof"! Since those days we have learned to contemplate it in less turbulent mood. The years that bring the philosophic mind have at least enabled us to think of it as of other limitations of our goodness—limitations which we shall all outgrow, and which, in this life or in the life to come, will all be done away in Christ. For, as I say, it is human life in miniature which you see. You are looking at it through the large end of the telescope; the figures are very tiny, but they are real. So many of the best people shrink from the rough work which at times has to be done for the Master. Christians have yet to be pathfinders, pioneers, iconoclasts, destroyers of the old, stern builders of the new, grim fighters for the truth. With trowel in hand, but with sword on thigh, we build again the walls of our Jerusalem. For the day of the Lord is ever upon us. And "the meekest of saints can find stern work to do in the day of the Lord at hand." Yet it is the meek saints, those who are truly meek and destined to inherit the earth, those who are really saints, thrust forth to exercise sanctifying influences upon their fellows, who naturally and almost irresistibly shrink from this stern work. For the senseless misunderstandings, the cruel misrepresentations, the petty vindictiveness—what we call the dust of controversy, the din of conflict—they have no taste. They find it easier to let the wrong thing be done than brace

themselves for hand-to-hand conflict for the right.

We call these people cowards. Yet it seems to me that the courage of the coward is a marvellous thing. There are words which to many of us are only words, and they scarcely convey a meaning at all. To these more timorous spirits they represent the most awful facts of life and death. "Convention," "opinion," "society," "the world," "precedent," "custom," and the like—for you, a scarecrow which the farmer has set up in his field, which you see as you dash past in the express, would have as much terror. And you can no more understand any grown man giving a second thought to such trumpery considerations than you could understand his huddling into a corner and covering his eyes with horror lest the scarecrow should shoot him with the bent stick which its maker has stuck under its arm. Yet these terrors of public opinion and public condemnation are real to your neighbour, to the person who sits next to you in the same pew. To assert an unpopular view, to champion an unpopular cause, to avow themselves the disciples and friends of an unpopular teacher amid the contemptuous smiles of a fashionable and ignorant mob, demands from them as much real courage as many a martyr has taken to the stake.

We have been told that if you trace on the floor a chalk circle, and put a goose inside it, no inducement in the world can prevail on the goose to

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cross the appalling line. He will starve inside the magic circle, starve to death within sight of food, but he will not move! There are men and women who are more goose than the geese. These chalk marks of custom and convention have been traced for them in circles of flame by the fiery swords of seraphs. And they could more cheerfully face the real fires of martyrdom than brave the milk-and-water persecutions of their day and their set.

But when at last the shrinking spirit nerves itself for resistance, for assertion, for public declaration of faith and principle and loyalty, how grand it all is! What joy in heaven there must be over one delicate, sensitive soul which has put on strength and stood forth bravely for the right! How the bells of heaven must ring, pealing forth a grander music to the stars, over the new-born courage of the fearful, than over ninety and nine brave persons who need no transformation!

The hero of my text is a grand, pathetic figure. He died nearly nineteen hundred years ago, but he is alive now, and I know him well. I admire him and pity him and reverence him and condemn him at the same time. He was not quite a saint. He was all but a hero. When there came to him the prompting, which never comes to any but sweet and candid souls, to go out and find for himself what there was of good in Him who was despised and rejected of men, he obeyed the prompting, but so secretly, so furtively,

with such infinite precaution against discovery, that men not one-hundredth part as good as he have called him coward ever since. When the impulse came to him, seated in honour in the high council of the State, to assert the everlasting obligations of the moral law, and either swing his nation and the world to the side of right for ever or die as a brave man dies for God, he acted on the impulse, but so weakly, with so poor a heart, that on him as on his fellows rests to this day the real guilt of the crucifixion. And yet this man, this craven hero, when the disciples had forsaken their Lord and fled, dares all, defies all, risks all, takes his life in his hands, and plays a part in the final scene of the tragedy of Calvary for which all who love the Lord Jesus Christ must for ever praise him!

Let us look a little more closely at this gallant coward. His name was Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the great and proud ecclesiastical court which for so many centuries represented all that was haughtiest and strongest in the religion of Israel. This man came to Jesus by night. He made his way from Jerusalem to Bethany, found the house of John, the beloved disciple, where Jesus was lodged. He glanced to the right and left up and down the narrow street, then drew his cloak more closely round him, and ascended the stairs outside the house to the guest chamber on the roof where Jesus was. Their conversation that night was one of the most momentous which history records;

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and when it was ended, and Jesus bade His guest farewell, with His hand upon the old man's shoulder, His voice stern, but His eyes speaking an infinite tenderness, He said, "*But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light.*" Nicodemus left Him. And it was night.

Later, the council of which Nicodemus was a member sent their military police to arrest Jesus. The police returned, reporting that they had failed to execute their warrant. They had listened to the preaching of this wondrous preacher, and had been paralysed by—they knew not what. "Never man spake like this man," they said. And then, as the members of the council burst into abuse and threats, Nicodemus timidly suggested, "Doth our law condemn any man without first giving him the opportunity to meet the charge and state his defence?" only to be remorselessly swept aside in the midst of his trembling plea for right.

Yet this is not all. Let us stand for a moment beside the Cross. Priestly hate and popular fury have done their work. Black darkness has settled down upon the hearts of all. The soldier's spear-thrust has been dealt. The Lord of Life is dead. Outside the walls of Jerusalem was a hideous ravine called *Ge Hinnom* or *Gehenna*, which the Authorised Version used to translate Hell. It was a place where offal was cast, and the carcasses of animals, and the bodies of criminals who had been put to death and adjudged unworthy of decent burial. It was

the common cesspool of the city. He was numbered with transgressors in His death, and His body would have been flung into this foul Gehenna but for Nicodemus and another one. Joseph of Arimathæa, also a night-disciple for fear of the Jews, begged from Pilate the body of Jesus that he might take it away. With him came also Nicodemus, bringing with him myrrh and aloes, the linen cloths and spices which Jewish burials demand. And the last offices of love and tenderness which men can pay to our frail mortality were discharged by Joseph and by Nicodemus—who had come to Him by night!

There is not a stage of the evolution of courage in the heart of Nicodemus which we do not recognise. Step by step how well we know it all! One of our great preachers has suggested that the night scene related in the third chapter of John is not really the first in Gospel history in which Nicodemus has appeared. When the Temple embassy came to John the Baptist, demanding the nature and authority of his mission, and went away with their adverse report, this ruler of Israel may have been amongst them.* And perhaps there were inclinations toward the right even then. But his less tolerant colleagues bore him down with the violence of their own opinions, and his report was theirs. You are at school, at college, at the university. Materialism is dominant. Scepticism, more or less defined, is in the air. And though you have not named the name of Christ, still there are instincts and

* Dr. Whyte: "Bible Characters."

feelings toward Him which stir your nature to gentle protest against the life which is being lived all round you. But the pressure of your surroundings is too much. You do as the others do. You speak as they do, or, at most, refrain from speaking in a contrary sense. If you do not altogether feel as they feel—what matters? You are overborne and swept along by the current too strong. You sign the report to your Temple—at most you let judgment go by default. Or, perhaps, the talk in your circle is about some bill before Congress, some proposal of the Government, some action of the City Fathers. It is not a question which you have studied deeply, in which you have arrived at some definite and firm conclusion. But again you have an instinct that this is wrong, and that it should be condemned. But once more you are swayed by the people round you. You are one in a crowd of polite and foolish persons; you cannot make yourself roughly objectionable by the obtrusion of unusual opinions about which, after all, you are not really confident. Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.

Nicodemus went to investigate. Perhaps you have gone so far. You have heard the preaching or read the books. You have opened your New Testament again. You have prayed for strength to see the light and follow the right. But when you have seen and understood, the decided and deciding step would cost you too much! Some loss might be involved; some

inconvenience would be. You feel a kind of shame, a bashfulness about openly taking the side of right, which constrains you and makes you feel awkward, and you blush to think of yourself facing the ordeal of public confession of faith in the meek and lowly Jesus. There is still some possibility of ridicule. The day of humiliation has not passed. And so you turn away while the touch of Christ is yet upon your heart and His voice is in your ears, *He that doeth the truth cometh to the light.*

The third scene is for ever re-enacted in our lives. The impulse has grown. The conviction that right is here, that right must be done, that right must be defended and wrong defied, has grown within you. The conviction is struggling toward utterance. And now it finds expression, and for your life you cannot but speak the thing which is in your soul! Yes; and how do you speak it? Why, with bated breath and whispering humbleness and in a bondman's key! And having spoken, you stand like the statue of Fear in the famous ode, "Frightened at the sound yourself has made." What is the use of such a poor little paltry protest against current iniquity, against vested interests in unrighteousness? Do you think that this mad world will hear or heed when you venture so humbly to insinuate your feeble objection to the course which things are taking? And what becomes of you? You and your opposition are soon swept away! High-handed

sin makes short work of apologetic interferences. And this is the reproach against us. This is our sin. And this is our great and exceeding loss and the world's loss, too. There are times when you have no right to think or speak or feel moderately. You shall not give a moderate warning to your neighbour that his house is on fire, nor moderately rescue your child from drowning, nor moderately snatch your wife from the hands of ruffians. You shall be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. You shall not equivocate. You shall not excuse. You shall not draw back. And you shall be heard.* My brother, stand up boldly for the right which you know to be right, for the truth which you know to be true. Follow light, though the faintest beam falls upon your path; follow light, until it broadens into the perfect day. Do the right in scorn of consequence, for God is God. And when a man does the right so strongly that he counts his life as of no importance, his example becomes omnipotent. It is the blood of the martyrs which is the seed of the Church. Are you waiting, and hesitating in your soul, and standing by, with the good impulse stirring within you, yet letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would"? Nay, do nothing of this, for while you wait, they are crucifying Christ. He that doeth the truth cometh to the light.

And at the last comes conquest. Nicodemus triumphed over his coward fears. When Joseph

* Lloyd Garrison; first copy of *The Liberator*.

of Arimathæa came to beg the body of Jesus, he came, too, to bury Him. Why did he not assert himself sooner? Why did he wait until his Lord was dead? Why was he not at the Cross? Why was he not by His side when the crowd cried "Crucify Him"? Alas, why do we all wait until, were it not for God's mercy, we should be doomed to a coward's fate, should live and move and have our being in the hell of a coward's remorse and a coward's despair? But Nicodemus rose to these grand heights at last. From them he looks down through the ages and beckons us in utter kindness. The day is not ended nor the story finished. There are new chapters to be added to the Acts of Apostles; and when men write them, your acts must be there. I plead with you for the exercise of your will, for the expression of the faith that is in you, for the courage which shall do the truth and come to the light.

"I do not wonder at what men suffer. I wonder at what men lose." Let us reckon up the losses of your fearfulness, in the light of Ruskin's famous phrase.

The first loss is to yourself. And it is the loss of precisely those things which you thought to gain by refusing to embroil yourself in controversies and conflicts. You keep out of this stormy struggle for the right in order to find rest and peace. Rest and peace you will never find in servile acquiescence as you will find it in whole-souled enthusiasm for the right. I speak

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what I know. I testify the deepest conviction of my life. While the storms rage; while you fight with wild beasts; while the thunders of popular hatred crash over your head and its lightnings dart through your sky; while it seems to you in very truth that Christ has come to fling fire on the earth, His deepest promise is fulfilled, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Do you believe that? I know that it is true.

When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'Tis said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.

Far, far beneath, the noise of tempests dieth,
And silver waves glide ever peacefully,
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the sabbath of that deeper sea.

So to the heart that knows Thy love, O Purest!
There is a temple, sacred evermore,
And all the babble of life's angry voices,
Dies in hushed stillness at its peaceful door.

Do you believe it? If not, try it! For you will catch your shadow and grasp it and walk arm in arm with it sooner than you will find the deepest peace and highest joy of which your nature is capable by timorous avoidance of duty. I do not wonder at what you suffer. I wonder at what you lose.

The next loss is to the men and women like you.
There are millions like you. Each one of these

uncounted millions can be helped and encouraged and inspired by the example of other units like themselves. "It is certain," says Novalis, quoted by Carlyle, "my conviction gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it." *Infinitely*, says Novalis, and Carlyle adds, "it is a *boundless* favour." This infinite gain, this boundless favour, is in your hands. Your example will be potent with another. You are not the man you meant to be. You have been saved from the gross sins and shameful disorders of life. And you can carry your head high. But you are not the man you would have liked to be. You are not as good a man as you meant to be. You would like your boy to be a better man than you. And would it not be a help to him if you were plainly to declare yourself for God and for His Christ? If you could break through the hampering restraints of your own timidity and through those which Society and Convention have fastened upon you, and stand forth for the spiritual and the eternal, would it be worse with your boy and his future, or would it be better? Is there nobody in your office and nobody in your home whose life would feel the touch of yours, if yours became heroic? The disciple who serves Him in secret is a disciple still, thank God! But it is loss to mankind that he will not serve Him openly in the gaze of all.

Do you remember Ruskin's last message to the world? It is exquisitely lovely:

"Looking back upon my efforts for the last twenty years, I believe that their failure has been in very great part owing to my compromise with the infidelity of this outer world, and my endeavour to base my pleading upon motives of ordinary prudence and kindness, instead of upon the primary duty of loving God—foundation other than which no man can lay. I thought myself speaking to a crowd which could only be influenced by visible utility; nor was I in the least aware how many entirely good and holy persons were living in the faith and love of God as vividly and practically now as ever in the early enthusiasm of Christendom, until, chiefly in consequence of a great illness, I was brought into closer personal relations with the friends in America, Scotland, Ireland, and Italy, to whom, if I am spared to write any record of my life, it will be seen that I owe the best hopes and highest thoughts which have supported and guided the force of my natural mind. These have shown me, with lovely initiation, in how many secret places the prayer is made which I had foolishly listened for at the corners of the streets; and on how many hills which I had thought left desolate, the hosts of Heaven still moved in chariots of fire. But surely the time has come when all these faithful armies should lift up the standard of their Lord—not by might nor by power, but by His spirit, bringing forth judgment unto victory; that they should no more be hidden, nor overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

If the enemy cometh in like a flood, how much more may the rivers of Paradise."

Yes; that is the call to us: the enemy has come in like a flood; we wait for the rivers of Paradise.

We must take account of still another loss, *the loss to the great men who are leading and teaching the nations.* They need us, they need every one of us. Though we do but stand up to be counted as their followers, though we should be only as names and numbers on the muster-roll of their legions, yet is the gain to them unspeakable. You can see their craving for the love and loyalty of men and women who will believe in them and avow their faith in every leader's life, in men so different as Mohammed and Mazzini, William the Silent and Washington. It is a debt of honour that we owe to them.

May we not reverently add, *it is the loss of Christ?* Suppose that on the dark betrayal night, when members of the Sanhedrim gathered in haste at the house of the High Priest, when perjured witnesses swore the Saviour's life away, and amongst the crowd of murderers in sacerdotal robes no man was found to venture all in glorious defence of righteousness, suppose that then Nicodemus had leaped forward to take the patient Prisoner's side! Though the chivalry had been unavailing, though the brave man had been trampled underfoot, and Christ had been crucified, amid the agony of Calvary, it seems to

me, there would have been in the Redeemer's tortured soul the grateful memory of one who had dared and died for Him. Not less joy, surely, fills the heart of the Son of God when you start forward to take His side, and count the world well lost for Him. Jesus of Nazareth, whom Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus buried, we shall see on earth no more. But the Christ of God I see in every crowded street. He appeals to me from every bed of pain. He cries to me from every broken heart. He is Incarnate, Tangible, Visible, in every moral movement. He stretches forth warm hands that cling and yearn for help in every great redemptive effort which glorifies our time, in the Peace movement, in the Temperance crusade, in the endeavour to realise in common life the Brotherhood of Man. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross. That joy let us complete, filling up what remains of the suffering of Christ, and carrying the Cross with Him! Live for yourself: you have denied your Lord! But do the truth and come to the light, and, even while the old tremors shake your limbs and whiten your lips and chill your heart, speak the brave word, do the brave deed, live the brave life, confess Him openly before men, and then listen for His mighty word, "Him will I confess before My Father, Who is in Heaven!"

II

THE DEEP MEANING OF LIFE'S VICISSITUDES

We pray against the tempest and the strife,
The storm, the whirlwind, and the troublous hour
Which vex the fretful element of life.
Me rather save, O dread dispensing Power,
From those dead calms, that flat and hopeless lull,
In which the dull sea rots around the helpless bark,
And nothing moves save the sure-creeping dark
That slowly settles o'er an idle hull.

—OWEN MEREDITH.

II

THE DEEP MEANING OF LIFE'S VICISSITUDES

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; God hath even made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out anything that shall be after him."—ECCLESIASTES VII. 14.

"THIS is the state of man: to-day he puts forth the tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms and bears his blushing honours thick upon him; the third day comes a frost, a killing frost; and—when he thinks, good easy man, fully surely his greatness is ripening—nips his root: *and then he falls!*" These lines are amongst the best known in English speech, and the fact of which they treat is perhaps the most commonplace in all our commonplace lives. There is no preacher nor moralist, no poet nor dramatist, who has not exhausted the resources of his art in the effort to bring out the deep meaning of life's vicissitudes. What preacher would not fear to provoke a smile if he set himself to discuss once more the chances and changes of human life?

And yet, the smile notwithstanding, it is to the consideration of this commonplace that our text invites us.

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The Bible loves these dramatic situations. And as children we have delighted in them. We have revelled in the stories of the shepherd boy who killed a giant, became king, and laid the foundations of a famous monarchy; of a great king who was driven from his palace into the wilderness where he ate grass like an ox; of the lonely prisoner who was carried from his cell to become the lord of Egypt; of the noble who was hanged on the gallows he meant for his foe; and of intriguing priests who were flung into the flames they had kindled for the servants of God. In our later years we have been charmed by the swift transitions of Bible story from loveliness to terror and from tragedy to peace. We open the first page of the Book of Life, and we are in a garden, with fruits and flowers and sunshine, with man and woman living in pristine innocence with companionable beasts and talking serpents. But very quickly the sunshine blackens and we find ourselves in the presence of reproaches, recriminations, remorse, tears, curses, and flaming swords. We turn to the closing chapters of this same Book of Life, and our nerves tingle with the pain of them. Before us spreads scene on scene of ghastly horror—misery, martyrdom, massacre; the earth is moved, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. It is

With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

Yet before the Revelation closes we walk amid the white robes, the palms, the crowns, and hear the promise of a day when there shall be no more sorrow nor sighing nor pain nor death, when God shall wipe the tear from every eye. And in still deeper mood we have turned from the rapt contemplation of the Son of Man, making His triumphal entry into His royal city, while the happy crowds cried their glad Hosannas, to see, yet veil our eyes that we might not see, those other crowds with frightful faces and murder in their hearts, as they yelled "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And the Lord of Life and Glory dies upon a Cross.

In the history of men and nations we seem to see the sportive fates playing such fantastic tricks with the great and small of earth, that the centuries do but lead on a procession of masqueraders from the throne to the scaffold and from the scaffold to the throne. The vicissitudes which we experience ourselves, and which we observe in the lives of men and women round us, are neither less complete, less picturesque, nor less momentous.

In the morning you go forth to your life, like one of Ruskin's "queens" to her garden, "to play with the fringes of its guarded flowers and lift up their heads when they are drooping"; and at night you wander amid the wreck of worlds. Prosperity smiles upon you; friendship is beautiful; and the sunshine is in your heart; and lo, in the twinkling of an eye, the stroke

of affliction has fallen upon you, and the waves of desolation have gone over your soul! One day you are rejoicing in health, happiness, and the pride of life; and on the morrow you are crying out for pity to leaden skies which are deaf to your appealing. Or, on the other hand, in the blackest night of the year, when the stars have all gone out, the promise is fulfilled to you in God's own way that "at eventide there shall be light." It is a midnight sun which shines upon you; in the east is the dawning of the morning, and your horizon reddens with a glowing hope. In your path the flowers spring; men and women with open hands are as the legions of ministering Spirits to whom God has given charge concerning you; and the voices of those who love you are as the voices of the many-sounding sea.

Truly, we know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth, of joy or of sorrow, of trial or triumph. We feel that to-day is ours; we remember that yesterday was; to-morrow only may be. We remember what yesterday was like; we know what to-day is; all that we know about to-morrow is that it will not be like either. And the one thing that is certain about the future is, that nothing is certain about it!

Our text deals with all this, deals with it very curiously. And it begins with what seems a fine piece of irrelevance:

"In the day of prosperity be joyful." Well,

that, you say, we can very easily do! It will be no great hardship to be joyful when we walk in silver slippers in the front rank of Fortune's favourites! In the day of prosperity be joyful! By all means, we will be. Our difficulty up to the present time has not been to be joyful when prosperity has smiled upon us, but to find the prosperity which should bring us joy! If the Preacher would tell us how to behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way when Prosperity flies from us, how to bear the whips and scorns of time, when "we grunt and sweat under a weary life," we might thank him for his counsel. But we are able, without assistance, to be sufficiently joyful in the day of our Prosperity.

Is that true? Or is it not rather true, as Bishop Butler has told us in his solemn way, that "Prosperity itself, while anything supposed desirable is not ours, begets extravagant and unbounded thoughts," and that Prosperity itself is a real and lasting source of danger? Is it not a matter of common observation that the danger which Prosperity sets up is precisely this, the danger of discontent? Do you not see very often that a man who has all that heart could wish—except the heart to enjoy it!—is infinitely less "joyful," less content, less happy in his lot, than some poor, labouring, honest fellow who scarcely knows to-day where to-morrow's meal will come from, or yon poor body with her crowd of little children who knows

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not how to make the two ends meet and tie? Yes, there is reason in the exhortation, In the day of Prosperity be joyful.

But literally this advice is, *In the day of good be in good!* And perhaps that brings out the meaning to us better than a better reading would. In the day of good be in good! Take the good the gods provide you; take the good your Father gives. Take it, use it, enjoy it, be happy in it. Don't be afraid of your happiness. Don't think of it as a fearful and a wondrous thing which will escape you as soon as you seek to grasp it. If God gives you happiness, be happy in it; if light, walk in the light; if joy, enjoy it! We are sharers of the glorious gospel of the happy God.

People are too often afraid of happiness. And they are afraid of admitting that they have reason to be happy. One of the most famous of living Scotsmen tried the other day to explain to my dull Saxon comprehension the meaning of that mystic phrase "my frail ordinary." He assured me that each word was an English word, and that I ought to understand it, and then proceeded to expound the use of it. In answer to the common salutation, "How do you do?" a big, robust son of toil who has never known a day's illness in his life will make answer, "Weel, I'm just in my frail ordinary!" He is afraid of admitting that he is in splendid health, afraid that if he did such boasting might cost him dear. A hundred times within the last

twelve months I have heard the French equivalent for it. "*Pas si mal*," your French friend says to you, and would not for his life admit that "not so bad" means superlatively well. While if you ask your most intimate friend, whom you have not seen lately, "And how's business?" the very best you will ever get out of him, if he is working night and day and making money so fast that he does not know what to do with it, is "Well, I mustn't complain."

It would be nice to think that all this only pointed to a modesty which was unable to boast of anything, even of God's good gifts. But it points to nothing of the kind. If we could trace it back we should find that it points away to the old notion about jealous gods, and to the superstition that they were always waiting to pounce down upon you if things were going too well. When the ancients felt themselves "too happy," when all the world conspired to bring them joy, they dreaded the jealousy of these watching gods, and threw away some precious thing to turn the spite of deities. And I am quite sure you have heard your grandmother say, when you were young, "Yes, you are laughing this morning, but you will cry before night!" While the old blasphemy is not yet dead, that if you love your child too well, "make an idol of him," God, "who is a jealous God," will take your child from you, that "you may have no gods before Him"—the God of Love, whom Jesus taught us to call Father, jealous of the deepest,

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highest virtue of our souls which makes us likest Him!

In the day of Prosperity, be joyful! In the day of good, be in good! Love the good, enjoy the good, and give God thanks. Fill your heart with happiness, and walk in the power of it. Eat the flesh, and drink the sweet, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; and make every day a holy day unto your God, for humour is His gift as truly as pathos is, and smiles are from Him as well as tears.

But read on: "*In the day of adversity consider.*"

And then the Preacher tells you what to consider, according to our Version. But it is just possible that really the exhortation stops there: In the day of adversity, consider it well; ponder the facts; look carefully; find out the meaning of this adversity, and make the best of it.

Certainly, if the phrasing of the text will bear that meaning, it is sound and sensible advice for us all. There is no position in life so bad but that we ought to make the best of it. And the difference between a strong soul and a weak one is here: that the weak one submits to what he calls the "inevitable," accepts with the faintest show of a struggle, and bows his head beneath the blow. But the strong man declares that nothing is "inevitable," says that the word only connotes a moral imbecility, plucks safety from the nettle danger, and snatches victory from the jaws of death. If the day of adversity

is upon him, the more reason for him to keep his eyes wider open, his wits more alert, and to seek a closer walk with God.

"The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost," says Browning, "is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin." And be very sure that amongst our sins, yours and mine, will have to be imputed our criminal readiness to make the worst of a bad position, when, if we did but lay hold on God, we might so easily make the best. "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, who had done mighty deeds," and knew that what had been done once could be done again, and knew that if the worst came to the worst it was better to die fighting than die flying—"slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow." Slew a lion, without a Winchester repeating rifle, knife to throat and hands to claws; in the midst of a pit, where there was no place of vantage to be had for the valiant man; in time of snow when the very elements fought against him. A hard fight, in a bad position, at a cruel time; but the Benaiahs of life, the valiant men, sons of valiant men, who themselves have done mighty deeds, will make the best of it all.

Do you remember how Emerson found this to be amongst the high virtues of Englishmen? He was in England some fifty or sixty years ago, in a time of national depression. He brought to the study of English manners and morals as acute an intellect as was to be found on the earth at that time. And he said that while in prosperity

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the English were "moody and dumpish," yet in adversity they were "grand!" He found in them a kind of instinct that they could see better in a cloudy day. In storm of battle and calamity he found in them "a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon." This virtue of strong Englishmen is worthy to be sought. In the day of adversity—*Consider!*

But, according to our text, there is one great and special thing to consider. In this great and special thing the Preacher finds the deep meaning of life's vicissitudes.

He says that God has made the one side by side with the other; and then he alleges a reason for God's plan. Wait one moment for the reason. Ask, first, if the fact, as he alleges it, is a fact at all. For he means to say that God has balanced prosperity and adversity pretty fairly in human life. That joys and sorrows are, on the whole, distributed to all people in a fair proportion. That in each individual life, sorrow is reasonably proportioned to happiness; and that when life is compared with life, the average of happiness and misery in one life runs about level with the average of happiness and misery in another.

Is that true?

It does not look true. With the first superficial glance you would want to sweep away such a doctrine. But look more deeply into life. It seems too foolish to say that the healthy and the sick,

the rich and the poor, the honoured and the humble, all find one average of sorrow and joy. But I believe that it is true. There are such compensations in human life, and happiness and unhappiness are such relative and temperamental things, that perhaps final justice is done to all. If you are capable of exquisite pleasure, you are susceptible to exquisite pain. If your ardent nature is such that you mount with wings of eagles to the mountain peaks of rapture, again and yet again you are plunged into the Slough of Despond. And if, by the very structure and fibre of your being, you find yourself unable to soar to these heights of joy, by the same structure and fibre of your being you are saved from the unspeakable wretchedness in which another's soul is overwhelmed.

There is a fine passage in Emerson about this subtle compensation which Nature pays. I must quote him to you again, for he has been my companion in many a lonely hour:

"Dualism underlies the nature and condition of man. Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess. Every sweet hath its sour; every evil its good. Every faculty which is a receiver of pleasure has an equal penalty put on its abuse. It is to answer for its moderation with its life. For every grain of wit there is a grain of folly. For everything you have missed you have gained something else; and for everything you gain you lose something. If riches in-

crease, they are increased that use them. If the gatherer gathers too much, Nature takes out of the man what she puts into his chest; swells the estate, but kills the owner. Nature hates monopolies and exceptions. The waves of the sea do not more speedily seek a level from their loftiest tossings than the varieties of condition tend to equalise themselves. . . . The farmer imagines power and place are fine things; but the President has paid dear for his White House. It has commonly cost him all his peace and the best of his manly attributes. To preserve for a short time so conspicuous a place before the world, he is content to eat dust before the real masters who stand erect behind the throne. Or do men desire the more substantial and permanent grandeur of genius? Neither has this an immunity. He who by force of will or of thought is great, and overlooks thousands, has the charges of that eminence. With every influx of light comes new danger. Has he light?—he must bear witness to the light, and always outrun the sympathy which gives him such keen satisfaction by his fidelity to new revelations of the incessant soul. He must hate father and mother, wife and child. Has he all that the world loves and admires and covets?—he must cast behind him their admiration, and afflict them by faithfulness to his truth, and become a by-word and a hissing.”

In homelier phrase an English poet has voiced his agreement with the American seer and the Hebrew preacher:

Great is the doctrine of equivalents;
 Mighty and universal is the law
 Of compensation—If we lose we gain,
 And if we gain we lose. So rolls the world.
 The hand of Justice holds the eternal scale.
 If we are happy in the world's esteem,
 Perchance we have a secret sore within.
 If great, we may behold a skeleton
 Taking its place behind us at our board,
 To give us warning what the end shall be;
 If we are mean, we have a comforter
 In the conviction that we cannot fall
 Beneath the lowest depth at which we lie.
 If we are sane, we feel our sanity
 In care, and sorrow, and perennial toil.
 If we are mad, just Heaven looks pitying down,
 And sends us dreams that shame realities.

This, in effect, is the fact which our text seeks to bring out. God has balanced adversity against prosperity in the world at large and in each human life. But when we come to what is stated to be the reason of this balancing of the one against the other, we move amongst hard sayings. It is "to the end that man should not find out anything that shall be after him." In despair of bringing the obscure meaning to the light, we attempt various interpretations. God has balanced adversity against prosperity in this way so that, hiding the future from you, you shall not be able to find out anything that shall be after you have left this earth. It is foolish to scratch and save and starve your soul in the endeavour to pile up wealth for those that will come after you. You cannot plan the future of your children. Life is played upon by a

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thousand currents and cross-currents; and though you plan for nine hundred and ninety-nine of the possibilities of life, it is the thousandth eventuality, on which you did not calculate, which comes to throw all your plans into confusion. Nor can you bind the thoughts and purposes of the generation which will follow. Abandon your attempt to chain the lusty limbs of the future's strong ones in the dead fetters of bygone days. These, and a score of good reflections, are covered by the wording of the text. Take all in a word:

You cannot know what the future will be; better leave it in the hands of God. Your dreams are idle. Your speculations are idle. You must take short views of life. It is better to trust in the Lord than to wear your heart out in fret and care and brooding desire to plan a future which mocks your planning. In the day of prosperity, enjoy your prosperity and give God thanks. In the day of adversity, make the best of it, and still give God thanks. It is by the special mercy of our God that we only live one day at a time! Never was more precious boon included in the course and constitution of this universe of ours! To-day you only have to live to-day. Do not live to-morrow before it comes. No man has ever broken down under the burdens of to-day. In one day he will not be afflicted beyond his strength to do and to endure. You break down only when in your un-faith you add to-morrow's burdens to those

you bear to-day. Then your strength gives way and you are lost. Do nothing of all this. Your times are in God's hands. Be satisfied to leave them there.

But this I ought to say. You cannot trust; you have no right to trust—if you could force yourself to trust, your confidence would be misplaced—unless your life is right with God. The confidence which Jesus taught is a simple and a lovely thing. It is not manly resignation, which is a virtue in default of a better. It is not Stoic heroism and endurance, which the brave may attain and which the bravest will not despise. It is something higher, sweeter, more precious, and, thank God, more common than these. It is Communion. It is Fellowship. It is not prayer for deliverance from trouble, nor prayer for material gifts. It is the secret and intimate relation of a happy child who is content so long as he is sure that his father is by his side. This is the unbroken Fellowship with the Father in which Jesus lived. This is the trust in God to which He invites us, and the promise of peace which He makes to the untroubled heart. Draw near to God in Christ, and the promises of an elder day will assume for you fresh meaning and power in all the vicissitudes of your life. Friends may fail us when the hour of adversity comes, but

When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the Lord will take me up.

Storms may break upon us, but

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The Lord sat enthroned as King at the Flood;
The Lord sitteth enthroned as King for ever;
The Lord will bless His people with peace.

Distance may part us from our loved ones, and
in the deep darkness we may fear to lose them; yet

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold Thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,
And Thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night;
Even the darkness hideth not from Thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee!

This is the infinite joy of living—to know that we are safe in the Father's hands because we are dear to the Father's heart. Fear no future, since your hands are clasped in His. You cannot know the future. Your wisdom is not to seek to know, but to rest in that great word of Christ's: "Your Father knoweth." O ye of little faith, your Father knoweth all.

III

THE HALF GREATER THAN THE
WHOLE

No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe
that is not enthusiastic.—“ECCE HOMO.”

III

THE HALF GREATER THAN THE WHOLE

"When I am weak, then am I strong."

—II. CORINTHIANS XII. 10.

IN the Book of Judges there is preserved a curious story about a warrior chief who prepared for victory by reducing his forces. First, by proclaiming a free discharge to every officer and man who would avail himself of it, he reduced his effective strength from thirty thousand to ten thousand. Afterwards, by a singular device, the meaning of which is past finding out, he further reduced this ten thousand to three hundred. With so small a company of braves he won a notable victory. Ever afterwards Gideon believed that a part is greater than the whole.

In the reign of Charles II. the Act of Uniformity deprived of their livings all ministers of the Gospel who would not conform to everything contained in the Prayer-book. Two thousand noble souls, driven from their Churches, their homes, their people, stripped of honours, titles, prospects of advancement, beggared of worldly resources, went forth to preach a free Gospel, trusting in the power of prayer and the love of God. They were the Fathers of Nonconformity,

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our spiritual ancestors of whose blood we are, and the record of two centuries has shown that the half was greater than the whole.

The life-story of Hellen Keller is one of the strangest, most pathetic, most inspiring in any tongue. She is deaf, she is dumb, she is blind. Her mind, it would seem, is hermetically sealed. Knowledge, light, pleasure, one would say, are forbidden access to her soul by any avenue known to man. But she has acquired a knowledge of art, science, literature, a knowledge of men and things and of the universe, which would put many of us to shame. And the attendant physician who has written the story of her life says, "It is pleasant to think that she will ever only see the noblest side of every human being. While near her, the roughest man is all gentleness and pity. She knows absolutely nothing of the unkindness, hostility, narrow-mindedness, hatefulness, and wickedness of the world around her." We are almost ready to wish ourselves blind, and deaf, and dumb! Truly, the half is greater than the whole!

Many a man has been stronger for his weakness, richer for his poverty, happier and more honoured by reason of some shock or sorrow which seemed to shatter his life. The sermons of Frederick William Robertson, which soothed, comforted, braced, and inspired the most thoughtful minds of his generation, and which, repeated by other voices from ten thousand pulpits, still go on soothing and comforting, bracing and in-

spiring, were produced amid physical pain which amounted to torture. Some of the most superb flights of oratory compassed by the daring genius of Robert Hall were achieved in moments when, unseen, he twisted and writhed in pain, and gripped the front of the pulpit in his agony. Gounod, the great composer, it is said, was always attacked by a mysterious illness when about to bring out one of his great works. Schiller's finest work, according to Carlyle's judgment, was produced during the last fifteen years of his life. During that time there was not a day which did not bring its burden of pain. As for Carlyle himself, while there are times when his cowardly groanings and complainings, blending with the preaching of a silent, divine courage, almost make you despise him, it is still true that in his most splendid triumphs he suffered unto blood. Calvin's immense labours were carried through amid pain and weariness. Luther suffered so cruelly from great pains in the head that when he tried to work he was in danger of fainting. One need not add that Luther, as a matter of course, attributed it all to the devil. But from the *quality* of the life which remains when the quantity has been abstracted by misfortunes, sickness, or sorrow, it would seem that the mysterious visitant is a "spirit of health," no "goblin damned," that he brings with him "airs from heaven," not "blasts from hell." "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses,

for Christ's sake," affirms the gallant heart of this heroic Paul; "for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Now, would it surprise you to hear it said that in this exultant mood of his, our great Apostle had anticipated one of the most brilliant generalisations of the mental science of our own day, and that he was asserting in his downright fashion the living and luminous truth which psychology unfolds and illustrates, that the half is often greater than the whole?

When we speak of a Bible writer "anticipating" some great results of modern science, nothing mechanical is meant. It is necessary to guard ourselves against the devices of a cast-iron literalism, or we shall find ourselves saying, as Mr. Gladstone was tempted to do, that the Genesis story of Creation "anticipated" the deliverances of nineteenth century geology; or finding, as simple folks have done, a description of the electric car in the prophecies of Ezekiel. The "anticipation" of which I speak is a marvellous intuition which leaps to a great truth, which cannot all express that truth, nor account for it and label it, but which seizes upon its essential realness, and grasps its just conclusions. In this way, Paul's declaration is abreast with modern thinking, and the psychologist will explain what the Apostle felt.

It seems probable that the researches of the Alienist—the Specialist in mental disease—have

set men on the track of this generalisation. Let me try to explain. It is very interesting.

Men have always felt that if genius was not a little bit mad, it was, at least, not far removed from madness. One of the best-known couplets in the language is that of Dryden:

Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

And Shakespeare's line is like it:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet, are of imagination all compact.

And these well-thumbed quotations from our own authors do but reproduce such sayings as this from Aristotle:

Many persons become poets, prophets, and sybils, and are pretty good poets while they are maniacs, but when cured can no longer write verse.

And this from Plato:

Delirium is by no means an evil, but, on the contrary, when it comes by the gift of God, a very great benefit. It often happened that when God afflicted men with a fatal epidemic, a sacred delirium took possession of some mortal and inspired him with a remedy for these misfortunes.

And nearer to our own times, Diderot, one of the great writers who prepared the way for the French Revolution, said:

I conjecture that these men of sombre and melancholy temperament only owed the extraordinary and almost divine penetration which they possessed at intervals, and which

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led them to ideas, sometimes so mad and sometimes so sublime, to a periodical derangement of the organism. They then *believed* themselves inspired, and *were* insane. . . . Oh, how near are genius and madness! Those whom heaven has branded, for evil or for good, are more or less subject to these symptoms; they reveal them more or less frequently, more or less violently. Men imprison them and chain them, or raise statues to them.

And Lombroso, in one of the most pathetic, erratic, ludicrous books which "science," itself gone crazy, has given to our world, opens his argument with these comforting words:

It is a sad mission to cut through and destroy with the scissors of analysis the delicate and iridescent veils with which our proud mediocrity clothes itself. Very terrible is the religion of truth. The physiologist is not afraid to reduce love to a play of stamens and pistils, and thought to a molecular movement. Even genius, the one human power before which we may bow the knee without shame, has been classed by not a few alienists as on the confines of criminality, one of the teratologic forms of the human mind, a variety of insanity.*

The physiologist may not be afraid to make his wonderful attempt to reduce love to a play of stamens and pistils, nor are we afraid that he will succeed in doing it! Neither has poor Lombroso convinced us that genius is a variety of criminal insanity. But these men have set us thinking. And with their passion for massing facts, they have supplied us with material on which to base certain conclusions. They have brought before us a thousand cases of what they have taught us to call the neuropathic tempera-

* "The Man of Genius," Contemporary Science Series.

ment, cases of persons suffering more or less acutely from an overexcited, morbid, or deranged nervous system. They have shown us how a nervous temperament may combine with a superior intellect. And they have proved that this superior intellect, excited, goaded, inflamed to ardour, and driven at highest pressure, is more likely to effect momentous and permanent things than if the man had been blessed with the placid nerves of a healthy cow. The Apostle Paul had not these facts before him. He made no effort to reason these things out. But—himself epileptic, according to this strange Lombroso—he was quite sure that in some way the power of which he was conscious was related to the feebleness of which he was equally conscious. He besought the Lord that the physical infirmity might be taken from him. And God said, "Nay; but My grace is sufficient for thee." "Power," said Paul, "is made perfect in weakness; wherefore I will glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For when I am weak, then am I strong."

Pressing these considerations into the most secret sphere of personal religion, Professor James, of Harvard, in a book which has been read and talked about by all religious teachers during the last year or two, presents the argument in these striking words:

In the psychopathic temperament we have the emotionality which is the essential condition of moral perception; we

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have the intensity and tendency to emphasis which are the essence of practical moral vigour; and, we have the love of metaphysics and mysticism which carry one's interest beyond the surface of the sensible world. What, then, is more natural than that this temperament should introduce one to regions of religious truth, to corners of the universe, which your robust Philistine type of nervous system, for ever offering its biceps to be felt, thumping its breast and thanking Heaven that it hasn't a single morbid fibre in its composition, would be sure to hide for ever from its self-satisfied possessors? *

Let us look more closely at these three characteristics, "Emotionality," "Intensity," "Mysticism," readily admitting that they may be symptoms of the weakness we have agreed to call neuropathic.

If "*Emotionality*" is weakness, then is such weakness strength indeed! For it is not less emotion we need in this cold world of ours, but more. What is the greatest difficulty which the preaching of the Gospel encounters? Drink—the habit and the traffic, which damn ten souls for every one that all the Churches save? Love of money—a root of all kinds of evil, the lust of gold viler and more shameful than all other? The incitements of pleasure—pitiful, belittling, making life ridiculous? No; we must find a narrower and yet wider answer. The greatest difficulty which the preaching of the Gospel encounters is your unresponsiveness. You are afraid of yourselves. You dare not let yourselves go. You dare not trust the impulses

* "The Varieties of Religious Experience," The Gifford Lectures, 1901-2; chapter I., "Religion and Neurology."

of your own heart. You dare not obey the instincts of your soul. Even when you rise to the courage of your convictions, you lack that deeper, higher courage, the courage of your intuitions. You are not so "weak" as to yield to your emotions; but you would all be stronger if you were!

It is the condition, says Dr. James, of "moral perception." Of course it is! The language of the Boston psychologist is new. The truth is as old as the Gospel of Christ. Men have thought that the way to right thinking was through a cool brain. Jesus Christ knew that the way was through a warm heart. The decorous person, who weighs and measures and calculates, and finds that in human life it is always "six on one side and five on the other," and says that it is a delicate and difficult task to decide which has the six, makes up his mind at last—and makes it up all wrong. Impulse is not infallible. Infallibility is not known amongst men. But impulse makes fewer mistakes than calculation. The man who has given his heart to the Purifier of hearts and his will to the Will that governs the universe, is oftener right than the man who calculates chances. The mistakes of "canny" people are contemptible. The heart is the organ of vision.

You remember Dr. Stockmann? * "In a house that is not aired and swept every day, within two or three years people lose the power of thinking or acting morally. Lack of oxygen

* Ibsen: "An Enemy of the People."

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enervates the conscience." But there are times when the conscience has been mightily oxygenated by the life-giving breezes which blow from the shoreless seas of God. Then we glow with moral fervour. We are exalted above the low level of our lives. These are the occasions when we see without the effort of looking and know without the drudgery of learning. These are the great moods, in which we ourselves are potentially great. These are the hours in which we ought to take decisions, make resolutions, offer vows. For these are the hours of insight.

You are in a great meeting. The leaders of a great cause make their appeal to you. The impact of the orator's spirit upon your own starts you from your cold self-mastery. You are touched to the deepest depths of all your being by the appeal to your dormant, yet deathless, sense of human liberty. In that moment you are ready to join with all noble souls in fighting the battle of civil and religious liberty. Or you are possessed, dominated, enthralled, by the spirit of the man who pleads with you for consecration to the work of national deliverance from the evils and horrors of the drink curse. Your heart leaps within you to meet the glorious impulses which stream from his, and, for a moment, you are ready to join hands with those who have banded to destroy the pirate's trade. Or you listen to the impassioned words of the preacher of the Cross. And there is something in the service which uplifts, solemnises, awes;

the singing of the hymns, the voice of prayer, the strange, subtle ministry of God's Spirit upon your own. Then you are ready to rise, in your soul of souls, and prostrate yourself before the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. But—but—there blows a chilling breath of common sense! Your fervour is less fervent and your ardour less ardent. And you tell yourself that it is not wise to act on impulse; you will go home and "think about it." Man, that is precisely what you ought not to do! That is the mistake you have been making all your life.

Thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

You say that you will be in a "calmer" mood to-morrow. So you will be. But you will not be better able to see into the heart of moral principle. It is always *now* that is the accepted time, the heroic time, the chivalric time. For all high resolve and brave life, *to-day* is the day of salvation.

We cannot command these hours of Vision. The mood is granted to us. It is only ours to act. But what actions are possible to us, after these visions! You have not forgotten Matthew Arnold's inspired and inspiring words? He calls the poem "Morality," but upon his own definition that "religion is morality touched

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with emotion," this is Religion, for it is suffused with noble emotion:

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight willed
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

And do not think that the hours of gloom are all that remain, that the high mood in which you see visions and dream dreams will never come back:

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.

Oh, grant that this is weakness, that the very words employed indicate that it is weakness, that to be "possessed, dominated, enthralled" is to surrender one's freedom and confess one's impotence—grant that "passion" is something which we have to suffer, as Archbishop Trench tried to prove to us, that the man of passion is the weak man, not the strong one—grant it all, and call it neuropathic, neurotic, what you will, and then, O our God, who art a Consuming Fire, make us weak with such a weakness! For when I am weak, then am I strong!

"*Intensity and tendency to emphasis*" is the next characteristic recognised as the correlative of this "weakness."

And there is danger of vain repetition. For, once again, if this be weakness, God forbid that we should ever be strong again!

This is the capacity of moral indignation, a weakness which is at once the power and the glory of strong men. There are times when it is a crime to keep cool; when an unruffled pulse is a disgrace; when measured speech is infamous. During the long agony of Armenia there was a man who suffered in his own soul the tortures inflicted by Turk and Kurd. Upon his brain and heart seemed to have accumulated the frightful woes of an outraged and slaughtered people. And it seemed to those who loved him that he would go mad under the pain and the shame. It would have been more creditable if we had all gone mad! I knew a woman who had left her home and sacrificed much to plead the cause of her race, of the coloured people in the Southern States of America. I have seen her, when the news of some fresh lynching horror reached us, shaken by storms of passion and of suffering. Then words, hot, hissing, terrible, fell from her, until pain passed into the blessed relief of tears. The other day, one of the greatly loved and hated advocates of international peace spent some hours with me. And as we talked of our sufferings during the shame of the war in South Africa, he told me that to him it was a crucifixion, and day and night he saw the little children, murdered in the Concentration Camps. And this generous man,

large in heart and brain, admitted to me, in the sweet intimacies of those who have shared a great grief together, that often he broke down, and alone, for hours, like a child, he sobbed and cried and prayed. Do you remember Mr. John G. Woolley, the fine-spirited advocate of Prohibition? Do you call to mind his dignified appearance and cultured speech—the man himself representing the best type of American gentleman?

And as you saw him, faultlessly attired and with his beautiful manners, did you picture him a degraded drunkard reeling through the gutters of Chicago? Imagine that you hear him now, as he answers the objection that the Drink question is just another question of political economy and must be so debated: "The drink traffic is not economics, but treason, overt, insolent, bloody as the shambles, black as the lees of midnight. I have eaten hell-ashes until my mind is alkaline and cuts up the unctuous lubricants of debate and spoils the play of thought. I hate it, and when I think, all the voices of memory, all the impulses of my soul, become an unleashed mob, crying, 'Kill, Kill!'"

All very reprehensible, I do not doubt; such passion is most improper; these displays of feeling are weakness, not strength! Oh, to be sure! Our madness condemns us. It is worse than wicked, it is vulgar! Well, let every discreet person stalk on solemnly, with imperturbable equanimity, to the Paradise of respectable mediocrity; but let

me burn and consume with the passion of the Woolleys, Garrisons, Luthers, Pauls of all the ages, for when I am weak, then am I strong!

"*Love of metaphysics and mysticism*" is the third characteristic—a "weakness" for this work-a-day world, who can doubt it? His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, seventy years ago, spoke very strongly to Mr. Gladstone* about the bishops abandoning the use of wigs. He said that nothing had done the Church so much harm! Now that we can understand. There is something solid and substantial about a wig. You can lay hold of it and grasp it and see that it is genuine and all good alike. Nothing has done the Church so much harm as the loss of the bishops' wigs. Foolish poets, akin, you remember, to lunatics, have sung that

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His own creation,
By water and the word;

foolish divines have pondered the eternal mysteries of Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection; what time foolish souls with a weakness for metaphysics and a love of mysticism, carrying their interest beyond the surface of the sensible world, have longed to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb! But for good, healthy Philistinism, which sweeps the board and leaves nothing more to say, preach to me the everlasting reality of the bishops' wig,

* John Morley's "Gladstone," Vol. I., p. 127.

predestined from before the salvation of the world to be the banner of our contradictions and the symbol of our faith!

It is a weakness, then, this interest which travels beneath the surface of material things, and seeks after the unseen and eternal. But a lady once said to Turner, the great painter, "Mr. Turner, I never see any sunsets like yours." And the artist answered, grimly, "No, Madam, don't you wish you could?" And that question is our answer to the strong people who have known nothing of our weakness, who have never seen what we have seen of God's presence, nor experienced what we have realised of the present life become immortality, nor tasted, as we have done, how gracious the Lord is. That is our answer: We are weak: but what would you give to be as weak as we are? For when I am weak, then am I strong.

And this—though there is only time for a bare word about it, and it is capable of a thousand illustrations and enforcements—is our answer to the pseudo-scientific materialists who would laugh religious experiences out of court because religious persons are hysterical, and all the rest of it. The author whom I have already quoted shows us how these objectors prove too much. For, on their own showing, genius, also, is insanity, on the confines of criminality, one of the monstrous aberrations of the human mind, a form of madness! Yet who ever thought of pouring contempt on "Hamlet," "Paradise

Lost," or the "Inferno," laughing at the "Descent from the Cross" or the "Last Judgment," flinging scorn on the "Perseus" of Benvenuto Cellini or the "Hercules" of Canova, and making mock of "Tannhäuser" or the "Moonlight Sonata" because genius is epilepsy, and epilepsy is localised irritation of the cerebral cortex?

And there is a world of wisdom in Dr. James' dictum that if there be such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it well might be that the neuropathic temperament would furnish the chief condition of receptivity. Again we are brought back to this living truth, that the half is greater than the whole.

And now, if the great, simple, helpful lesson of all this needs to be accentuated, the sermon has failed. We all have our infirmities, burdens, crosses, fears. "But God has not waited till this late, lonely hour to love us." Before the dawn of created life upon this earth we were present in His mind and heart. He has so planned this universe that we are remade by the things which would unmake us, renewed by that which would destroy us, and saved unto life eternal by that which we call death. Our sorrow is exceeding sorrowful; pain is always painful; and weakness hard to be endured. But sorrow, pain, and weakness have their mighty compensation. They rob us of half that life holds dear—but the half that remains is richer. They strip our life of half its joy—but the joy which abides gleams with a radiance brighter far. One half of our

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life has been taken from us at a stroke—but *the half that remains is greater than the whole!*

Tho' rapture of love is linked with the pain and fear of loss,
And the hand that takes the crown must ache with many a
cross;

Yet he who hath never a conflict hath never a victor's palm,
And only the toilers know the sweetness of rest and calm.

The easy path in the lowland hath little of grand or new,
But a toilsome ascent leads on to a wide and glorious view;
Peopled and warm is the valley, lonely and chill the height,
But the peak that is nearer the storm cloud is nearer the
stars of light.

Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my
weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest
upon me. Wherefore, I take pleasure in weak-
nesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions,
in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am
weak, then am I strong.

IV

THE ETHICS OF HOLIDAYS: A SUMMER
SERMON

I learned it in the meadow path,
I learned it on the mountain stairs,
The best things any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

The air we breathe, the sky, the breeze,
The light without us and within,
Life with its unlocked treasures,
God's riches—are for all to win.

The grass is softer to my tread,
For rest it yields unnumbered feet;
Sweeter to me the wild rose red,
Because she makes the whole world sweet.

Into your heavenly loneliness
Ye welcome me, O solemn peaks!
And me in every guest ye bless
Who reverently your mystery seeks.

And up the radiant peopled way
That opens into worlds unknown,
It will be life's delight to say,
"Heaven is not heaven for me alone."

—LUCY LARCOM.

IV

THE ETHICS OF HOLIDAYS: A SUMMER SERMON

"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile."—MARK VI. 31.

THERE were many coming and going and they had not leisure so much as to eat. The Apostles had returned from the missionary journey on which their Lord had sent them. They were flushed and excited by their success. The fame of the great Preacher and of His friends had spread through the land. Multitudes from all the cities thronged to see and hear. Then it was that Jesus said to His disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile."

There has been no day in the history of the world when such counsel was more needed than to-day. There are no people on the face of the whole earth who have more cause to heed it and profit by it than ourselves. Our cities are too vast and too crowded. Man, like other animals, was meant for the fresh air and the open fields, for the storms, the snows, and the sunshine. But he claps a stone box down over his head, sets it in the midst of a hundred thousand other stone boxes as ugly as his own, stretching away in bewildering squares and parallelograms, shutting out God's

air and light, until he is ready to faint on a warm day and freeze on a cold one, and die of pneumonia—or of terror—if the east wind blows upon him. This crowded, rushing, pushing, crushing city life gets on our nerves. We live too fast. We live faster than men ever lived before. We live more than twenty-four hours in the day and more than seven days in the week. We burn the candle at both ends; and then, for fear our neighbour should get ahead of us, we light it in the middle, too. We are consumed by the fever of living. We exhaust our vital energies in unending stress and strain.

We have no time to think. It is as much as we can be expected to do if we earn bread and cheese and lay by a dollar or two against a rainy day. The great majority of us are just as capable of flying as we are of thinking. Leisure for quiet contemplation of the world in which we live is denied us. There is no grass beneath our feet, no blue sky above our head. The world of trees and flowers and singing birds is not for us. Art and poetry and gentle culture exist only in a world of dreams. While if we once gave ourselves pause to meditate upon the deep things of God and the soul, on Time and its meaning, Life and its mysteries, Heaven and the glories which we thrust away, why—we might miss the next car. The injunction which insults me every time I travel by a certain railway is "Please hurry on for the lift." The "please" is in diamond type, and you need

a microscope to see it. The "hurry" you can read a mile away. Hurry, then, by all means, for we could not live if we did not kill ourselves to get somewhere else!

And yet, if we are determined to do it, even in the frenzied rush of our city life we can hear and heed the Saviour's call, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." One fine and gracious opportunity is offered to us by our summer holidays. The happiness which they bring us is of the first importance in a healthy, holy, Christian life.

We pray God to forgive us our sins: we ought to pray to be forgiven our sadness. There is no virtue in misery. The melancholy person is not necessarily a superior person; and if he were, the superior person is generally detestable. A face as long as a fiddle and a voice like that of an Alpine crow will not be imputed to us for righteousness. We shall not go to Heaven for our tears nor to Hell for our smiles. Humour is a gift of God as well as Pathos. In His presence is fulness of Joy. We are all sinners, and sometimes we deserve to be miserable. But it has not yet been shown why on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays we should call on God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and then on the holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons in one God, to have mercy upon us miserable sinners! One day Paxton Hood had to preach in a Yorkshire church where it was the custom for an official to announce

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the hymn. It was a glorious summer morning, when God's mercies fell on waiting hearts like the gentle rain from heaven and the earth smiled in the light of His countenance. And the good brother gave out

"My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
Damnation and the dead"—

when Paxton Hood leaped up and said, "Oh no, they don't! My thoughts do not roll on anything so dreadful. Let us sing,

"Come let us join our cheerful songs
With angels round the throne!"

Let us have done with these solemn hypocrisies of conventional worship. Let us frankly claim our heritage of happiness in a world whose builder and maker is God. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, they were like unto them that dream. Then was their mouth filled with *laughter*, and their tongue, with singing. And once, when these laughing, singing ones, whose captivity the Lord had "turned," saw their work approaching completion, and Jerusalem promising to stand once again as a city that is compact together, the assembled thousands, as one man, lifted up their voice and wept. But Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra, the priest, reproved their moanings and stopped their tears: "This day is holy unto the Lord your God: mourn not, nor weep. Go your way; eat the fat, drink

the sweet, send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." It is not for nothing, surely, that the Apostle Paul speaks to us of the glorious gospel of the "blissful" God; nor that our Saviour gives us the repeated assurance, "These things have I said unto you that *your joy may be full!*"

In all ages religion has claimed certain days and freed them from labour for the happiness of men. A "festival" is, historically, a day set apart for religious observance. The history of feasts and festivals is the history of religion and of civilisation. The religion of Israel was rich in such "feasts." Every seventh day was a Sabbath. Every seventh month was a sacred month. Every seventh year was a Sabbath year. And let us never forget that, although Exodus dates back the Sabbath to the imagined rest which the Creator took on the seventh day after working on six, yet those deeper, truer interpreters of God whom we call the prophets, allege a vastly different ground. Why do you always read the Ten Commandments from Exodus? Deuteronomy is a better book. It is the book which Jesus loved. Listen:

Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded Thee. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy

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cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; *that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.* And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; *therefore* the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

This is divine because it is so human. And the Sabbath was only one of innumerable Festivals, in all of which we trace the direct and conscious effort of religion to give men a breathing time, time to feel and meditate, a time to escape the toil and drudgery of life, an anticipation of the Saviour's invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile."

One fact is too colossal and ubiquitous to be ignored. Religious festivals, the wide world over, have degenerated into licence and sin. Every schoolboy reads this of the festivals of Greece and Rome. The Old Testament pages are crowded with warnings, entreaties, and threats as the prophets see the Festivals of the Church become an occasion of vice. The Carnival scenes of a thousand Roman Catholic towns witness to the same insensate law. Let us learn the lesson and heed the warning. How foolish many of our holidays are! And how harmful! We come back, worn out in body and mind, jaded, restless, disappointed. We have tried to see too much and do too much. We are not greatly wiser, after all, than Mrs. Poyser:

"I'd sooner ha' brewin' day and washin' day together than one o' these pleasurin' days. There's

no work so tirin' as danglin' about an' starin', and not rightly knowin' what you're goin' to do next; and keepin' your face in smilin' order like a grocer o' market day for fear people shouldna think you civil enough. An' you've nothin' to show for it when it's done, if it isn't a yallow face wi' eatin' things as disagreee."

And other excesses there are, which indicate that the holiday has served as an excuse for throwing off restraint, for the repudiation of the moral law, for an indulgence in mere brutish pleasures from which, in our sober hours, we should have disdainfully turned away. Let us listen again to the gracious invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile," for if it is in His company that we rest, every holiday will be a holy day.

I have spoken briefly, but I have said enough to show that from the point of view of any rational conception of religion the holiday is good in itself, that happiness may be accepted as God's good gift. And happiness may well be a minister of holiness. The genius of our language links together Health and Holiness. *Heal* and *Hale*, *Whole* and *Holy*, are one in structure and in spirit.

Yet there is more than this. For in our holidays we may come quite wondrously within the deepest ministries of God to human hearts.

In our holidays, as in all else, we must preserve a certain catholicity of temper, nor attempt to prescribe in what form another man shall keep

holiday. But for the most part we find our happiness in escape from the city to the country, to the mountains or the sea.

There we meet with God.

In the most impressionable years of my life I came under the influence of a teacher who was philosopher, historian, and poet. Nature he loved with a deep and tender and passionate love, and Nature never did betray the heart that loved her. She filled his life with blessings, but her richest was the love he bore her. Wordsworth was his Master; but the great classical passages of Nature-adoration from Byron and Matthew Arnold were also day by day upon his lips. The "Presence . . . whose dwelling is the light of setting suns," the "Heaven" which "lies about us in our infancy," "the light which never was on sea or land," with all those magical lines from "Immortality," "Tintern Abbey," "The Excursion," "Childe Harold," and "Obermann" which once heard make melody in our hearts for ever, grew more real, more full of meaning and power, when they were half-spoken, half-chanted by his deep organ-voice. And one summer Sunday night, when our work was done, and we were walking home, after quoting, as he used to, not caring whether anyone listened or not, some of these glorious lines, he said to me, "I am all my life trying to get at the Reality which lies behind the illusion of God's richer, nearer presence, the illusion which made Wordsworth what he was, and which turns all our thoughts, yours and mine,

to poetry to-night." As he spoke, I had no word to say. But I know now. I can hear him say, "There must be some Reality. I wish I could tell what it is." And I *know what it is!* It is all Reality. There is no illusion. It is God Himself who draws near to us, and lays His hand upon our hearts, and speaks to us, and makes us know Him and feel Him near. The revelation of God in Beauty is as real as any revelation of Himself which God has made and man received. I believe that the sense of Beauty in Art as well as in Nature has laid hold on mortals and brought them to the realisation of immortality. I have been told, and I believe, that God has come out of His eternal invisibility and touched men's lives to finer issues when the Hallelujah Chorus has smitten with its passion on their hearts; when a Madonna of Raphael or Murillo has smiled her sadness or her sweetness into their souls; when the majesty of the great cathedral, Ely, or Milan, or Cologne, has hushed every sense and sublimed every faculty to worship. But I speak of that of which I am more confident when I say that God Himself is near me—I know that He is near—when the fields blaze with scarlet and gold at my feet and the mountains tower grim and grand above me, when the river laughs and sings in the sunshine, or the moonbeams chase each silver wave over the bosom of the unresting sea.

If we try to analyse this ministry of God, we find it to be first Peace and then Power.

It is Peace with oneself. Under the calmly

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conscious stars, on the wide moor, amongst the eternal hills, or lulled by the multitudinous sea, passion dies; fretfulness, repining, foolish ambitions, petulant disappointments, take unto themselves wings and fly away. We wonder how earth can be unhappy while Heaven leaves us—not merely “youth and love”—but Nature, ourselves, and God.

It is Peace with our fellow-men. We have not analysed Man more carefully. We have not argued ourselves into a finer appreciation of the mind that looks before and after. We have not schooled ourselves to think no evil of our fellow-mortals. No; but sweet and subtle influences have stolen into our souls, and suspicion, anger, contempt, combativeness, droop and die. We are one with our kind.

And it is Peace with God. It must be peace with Him, for we are one with Him. We are immortal, here and now. We are mind of His mind; we have yielded our will to His pure and perfect will. In Him we live and move and have our being.

And it is Power. Our first feelings are of our insignificance. Later, we know that we are infinite. When we consider the heavens, the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars, which He has ordained, we cower before the revelation of our littleness. But as we consider them and yet again consider them, we find ourselves of ten thousand times more consequence than they and all the spheres of light. Then we rise

to the knowledge of our majesty, for Thou,
O Lord, hast crowned man with glory and
honour, Thou hast made him but little lower
than God! To us the prayer has been fulfilled,
the prayer of him, surely the most religious of
unbelievers!

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!"

And we, too, have turned from the glories
without to the glories within, have made our own
the fine experience of Lewis Morris in his "Even-
song," and have blessed God for the manifesta-
tion of Himself which has possessed us wholly:—

And through all the clear spaces above—oh wonder! oh
glory of light!—
Came forth myriads on myriads of worlds, the shining host
of the night,—

The vast forces and fires that know the same sun and centre
as we;
The faint planets which roll in vast orbits round suns we
shall never see;

The rays which had sped from the first, with the awful
swiftness of light,
To reach only then, it might be, the confines of mortal
sight;

Oh, wonder of Cosmical Order! oh Maker and Ruler of all,
Before whose Infinite greatness in silence we worship and
fall!

Could I doubt that the Will which keeps this great Universe
steadfast and sure

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Might be less than His creatures thought, full of goodness,
pitiful, pure?

Could I dream that the Power which keeps these great suns
circling around,
Took no thought for the humblest life which flutters and
falls to the ground?

"Oh, Faith! thou art higher than all." Then I turned
from the glories above
And from every casement new-lit there shone a soft radiance
of love:

Young mothers were teaching their children to fold little
hands in prayer;
Strong fathers were resting from toil, 'mid the hush of the
Sabbath air;

Peasant lovers strolled through the lanes, shy and diffident
each with each,
Yet knit by some subtle union too fine for their halting
speech:

Humble lives, to low thought, and low; but linked, to the
thinker's eye,
By a bond that is stronger than death, with the lights of the
ultimate sky:

Here as there, the great drama of life rolled on, and a
jubilant voice
Thrilled through me, ineffable, vast, and bade me exult and
rejoice!

There is one consideration which we cannot
escape. What of the myriads of our brethren,
pent up in mean streets, prisoners of the counting-
house and the shop, slaves of the mill and the
mine, the poor and heavy laden of every name-
less class to whom these words are bitter mockery,
for whom no changing seasons bring cessation

from toil and weariness? What of them—in these days of summer suns and joy?

There should be none such—except the vicious. And Christianity cannot rest while such mortals live, disfranchised of their right to rest and happiness. The unaccomplished mission of our faith is the redress of every economic inequality. There is no Gospel which is not a Gospel of social service. We live to bring all mankind into the family of God, joint-heirs with the most favoured life on earth of the unspeakable riches of Christ. But, meantime, while such poverty remains, while such evil conditions sadden and appal us, what right have we to our holidays, to our happiness? Can we sit at our feast blindfold, or dare we open our eyes? What right have we to any feast while our brothers starve in sight of plenty? What right? None—if our lives are wrong. If we are living for ourselves, thinking, planning, toiling, accumulating, enjoying, for ourselves—none. But if all life is to us a sacred trust; if happiness is only so much stored-up energy to be expended in divine, redemptive toil, then go, keep the feast and share the festival, charge your blood and brain with health and flood your soul with joy. And come back to our world of suffering and wrong, to spend your new-found strength again in the blessing of mankind.

But for the present, go away and forget! It is a counsel of perfection, and you would not follow it, else I would say to you: Go where you

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can have no letters, no newspapers, no telegrams, where the ring of the telephone bell is never heard, and where even Marconi cannot come! But at least, do your best to forget! Forget your business! Forget your debts! And forget your debtors! Forget that in this world is suffering, sickness, or sin. Only remember that the sun shines for you; the moonlight and the starbeams are for you; the tides ebb and flow for you; the gorse upon the hillside, the purple heather, and the fields which stand dressed in living green, are all for you. The earth, and the air, and the sky are yours, and Christ is yours, and God is yours, and all this God is all your own, your Father and your Friend!

V

THE NOBLE LIVING AND THE NOBLE
DEAD

There is
One great society alone on earth,
The noble living and the noble dead.

—WORDSWORTH.

V

THE NOBLE LIVING AND THE NOBLE DEAD

"Into thine hand I commend my spirit."—PSALM xxxi. 5.

THESE were the last words spoken by our Lord before His death. He was mighty in the Scriptures. He loved the Psalms. The rich devotional spirit of the great poets of His race was kindred with His own. Alike in controversy and in prayer, their words were ever upon His lips. Living, they were to Him an inspiration; dying, His last utterance was quoted from a Psalm. For millions of men, the Book of Psalms has been hallowed by the fondness of Jesus for it.

Our Lord quoted from the thirty-first Psalm. But as the ancient poet spoke it, the prayer had reference not to death, but to life. He does not ask that God will care for him in death, but protect him now in the midst of distress, pain, and fear. Troubles compass him around. Anxiety, danger, conflict, have wrecked his health. His eye is wasted by grief; soul and body are enfeebled; sorrow seems to have gnawed into his bones; his life is in peril. It is impossible not to think of Jeremiah; of the imprisonment, the stocks, the scourging. Perhaps our poet thought

of him, too. He describes his loneliness, the desertion of those who knew him, the cowardice of those who should have stood by him. There are three groups of feeble souls whose weakness has done him wrong. He is a "reproach" to his neighbours—because of the multitude and the power of his adversaries his "neighbours" reproach him. He is a "fear" to his "acquaintance"—how should they dare befriend him, champion his cause, even show sympathy with him, in the face of threats and hatred? And as for the larger, wider world, "they that did see me without," they fly from him as if he were a leper. And his prayer is the familiar prayer of weakness to Almightyness. He prays for deliverance from immediate and pressing dangers; for the sunshine of God's presence; and for permanent good issue from his fears. Then his faith pierces the future; he looks for a time when wisdom shall be justified upon the earth; when the voices of hate shall be silenced and lying lips be dumb. As for himself, he can rest in the assurance that God rules over all; "my times are in Thy hand"—the monuments, chances, changes, kaleidoscopic, unimaginable, God controls, and he is content. Into God's hands he commends his spirit.

Times of trouble will come to us all. The hour of darkness, loss, and trial waits for every one of us. In the form in which sorrow struck this man it will not strike us. The form is a thing indifferent. The fact is real. One day, sorrow

will break over our soul in storm, its thunders will crash around us, and we shall feel ourselves alone. The experience of the race, as humanity has trodden its path of sorrow, will not make our own grief lighter. Each one of us will say, "there is no sorrow like my sorrow," and the suffering which strikes us, though the same suffering has fallen upon men since man's life began upon this planet, will seem to us an isolated and abnormal wonder. "Never morning wore to evening, but some heart did break." Yet to dream that because "such loss is common to the race" it is less charged with elements of despair, is to proclaim oneself ignorant of the human heart.

Common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

We must not darken the present by anticipations of the clouds which will one day gather. But we can prepare for ourselves a shelter against the impending storm; we can find in God a sure refuge and defence.

Where will you find relief from sorrow, rest in weariness, comfort in bereavement, inspiration when your own strength is utter feebleness, if not in God? I have no answer to such a question. I have found no answer in the lives of men I know. I have found none in my own. I understand the man who finds God to be his "fortress" and his "high tower." I understand him who finds that God "is a very present help in time

of trouble." As perfectly as I am able to understand anything or anybody, I understand him who finds that "The eternal God is our dwelling-place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." But I do not understand what relief from the sorrows of life is to be found outside God. As to that, my mind is a blank.

The nearest approach to the consolations of God, of which I can think, is the fellowship of noble and inspiring minds. I know a man who carries about with him a pocket edition of Epictetus, as others carry their New Testament. How many devout souls have found consolation and strength in the author of Thomas à Kempis, in Pascal, in George Herbert? And amongst moderns, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, have been as ministering spirits to hundreds of us who have gathered here this morning. Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth:

Time may restore us in her course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force.
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?

John Morley endorses that. And many of us, for many years, have opened our souls to the inflow of Wordsworth's healing power. There are men and women here to whom the great thoughts and words of Alfred Tennyson have been as the very breath of life. Lines from "In Memoriam" have become part of our essential being. While the magnificence, the virility, the

uplifting and ennobling strength of Robert Browning have, for others of us, become a part of Nature's wealth, and in that glad opulence we are rich. These approach, and sometimes approach nearly, the consolations of God. Why? *Because these men themselves have drawn man to God.* Because they repeat what they have heard from Him. Because they reflect the glory which has shone from Him. Because they have thought His thoughts after Him, and repeated them in glad, good words to us. They have seen His face, and it is the after-shine of His presence which gleams on our path. It is His presence—adumbrated; His essence—diluted; His words, as best understood—repeated; His voice—echoed by their great tuneful voices, which bring us strength. "They are but broken lights of Thee, and Thou, O Lord, art more than they." There is a Mount of Transfiguration for every one of us. From its heights, each beholds the heavenly vision.

There is a beautiful, pathetic story told by Dr. Stalker in his "Trial and Death of Jesus Christ." I wish he had been able to give the names of those concerned, or at least, one name. But Dr. Stalker guarantees the story as true. This is the story, as he quotes it from a private diary:

"I remember, when I was a student, visiting a dying man. He had been in the University with me, but a few years ahead; and at the close of a brilliant career in College, he was appointed

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to a Professorship of Philosophy in a Colonial University. But, after a very few years, he fell into bad health; and he came home to Scotland to die. It was a summer Sunday afternoon when I called to see him, and it happened that I was able to offer him a drive. His great frame was with difficulty got into the open carriage; but then he lay back comfortably and was able to enjoy the fresh air. Two other friends were with him that day—college companions, who had come out from the city to visit him. On the way back they dropped into the rear, and I was alone beside him, when he began to talk with appreciation of their friendship and kindness. ‘But,’ he said, ‘do you know what they have been doing all day?’ I could not guess. ‘Well, they have been reading to me “Sartor Resartus” ; and, oh! I am awfully tired of it.’ Then, turning on me his large eyes, he began to repeat, ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief’; and then he added, with great earnestness, ‘There is nothing else of any use to me now.’”

There is nothing else of use to us, when our eyes are opened to the eternal world, the real world, the abiding world, when sorrow dims the lustre of visible things and grief rends the veil of the invisible; there is nothing else for us but God. And there is no answer to my question, Where will you find the help which you need for

life's conflicts and crosses, if you find it not in God? For lack of such a refuge, life is often darkened into tragedy. Dissipation; evil courses; abandonment;—these are too frequently the refuge of the breaking heart. And even when the more gross and shameful sins are missing, what a miserable spectacle is that carping, petulant, wrecked old age, on which we look with pity, disgust, and fear, “the last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history, second childishness, and then oblivion”! Contrast that “seventh age” of man with Paul’s great invocation,—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God!” Divine tautology of faith and love!

But now I want you to observe how men have used these great and simple words when they have stood in the presence of death. It must be safe to say that millions have died with them upon their lips. At least, some of the most notable and fruitful deaths of which history has taken note are signalised by the repetition of these words when life was well-nigh ended.

When the murderers of Thomas à Becket broke in upon his devotions in Canterbury Cathedral, the Archbishop faced them boldly. They struck at him and drew blood. Becket had strength to wipe the stain from his face, spoke

these deathless words, "Lord, into thine hand I commend my spirit," received the fatal thrusts, and died.

Christopher Columbus, deserted, broken, sorrowful, disgraced, beside his bed the chains in which ingratitude and treachery had dared to fetter the Admiral of the Sea, in a wretched lodging, breathed out his life with these words upon his lips, "Lord, into thine hand I commend my spirit."

I have stood in Constance where John Huss stood when they clothed him with the sacerdotal robes, only to strip them from him and degrade him. They thrust into his hand the chalice, gave him the last opportunity to abjure his heresies, and when he refused, said, "O accursed Judas, we take from thee this cup filled with the blood of Jesus Christ!" And he replied, "But I hope, by the mercy of God, that this very day I shall drink of His cup in His own kingdom." They placed on his head a paper cap, in shape like a mitre, on which were painted hideous pictures of demons and flames. "Most joyfully," said Huss, "will I wear this cap of shame for thy sake, O Jesus, who for me didst wear a crown of thorns." Then the priests said, "Now we devote thy soul to the devil." And Huss, lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, "But I do commend my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus, for Thou hast redeemed me." They led him outside the city to a green and peaceful meadow. They bound him to the stake. As he lifted his eyes

to the sweet sky above him, the paper mitre fell from his head. One of the soldiers rushed forward and replaced it, saying that Huss must be burned with the devils whom he served. They kindled the flames round him. I have stood by the stone which marks the spot of his agony and his triumph, and have thought that I could hear again the words which once more he spoke before his lips were still in death, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit." Ten months later, his brilliant friend, Jerome of Prague, was burned on the same spot, on his dying lips the same words, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit."

Thirteen times tortured with the frightful torture instruments of that day, Robert Southwell, priest, Jesuit, poet, after spending three years in a filthy prison cell, was carted from Newgate to Tyburn with a rope round his neck. He stood up, with pinioned hands, and as the cart was being drawn from under him that he might hang, still repeated, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit."

Luther and Melanchthon both died in their beds, both passing into the nearer presence of God with these faintly spoken words as prayer, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit."

George Wishart was roasted at the foot of the sea-tower of St. Andrews. He kissed the executioner upon the cheek, as a sign that he forgave him, and died as he murmured, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit." Twenty-

five years later, his disciple, the man who came after him, who was greater than he, whose iron will, stormy eloquence, and noble life had saved Scotland from Rome for ever, John Knox, died triumphant and in peace in his own house at Edinburgh, but his dying words were the same, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit."

Egmont and Horn, in whose deaths began the unquenchable revolts of the Netherlands, before whose monument in Brussels so many of us have stood, and wondered and admired, knelt to receive the headsman's stroke, each repeating these self-same words, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit."

An old, old man, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, Cardinal of the Roman Church, doomed to death by Henry VIII., neither his great learning, his pure and simple life, nor his public services availing to save him, in his decrepit old age, so weak that he could scarcely stand, carried to the scaffold, "with the joyful mien of a man who receives the boon for which he craves," prepared to receive the stroke of the axe, still murmuring these immortal words, "Into thine hand I commend my spirit."

A fair, young girl, Lady Jane Grey, when she saw the block on which she was to die, said, "I pray you despatch me quickly." She tied the handkerchief about her eyes, then, feeling for the block, said, "What shall I do? Where is it?" One of the bystanders, guiding her thereto, she laid her head upon it and said,

"Lord, into thine hand I commend my spirit."
And so she ended.*

All these died in faith. And of how many of the obscure, the silent, and the dead, of whom history makes no mention, of whom the world was not worthy, might not the same record be made? Their names are not written in the Book of Heralds; they are in the Lamb's Book of Life. Catholics and Protestants, Fighters and Preachers, Men of Thought and Men of Action, old and young, world-weary old men and gentle girls in the beauty of dawning womanhood—they lived and died and live again in God.

There are one or two question which I fain would have you answer to yourselves, if you will. And the first is this: Has anything happened of late years to make this God, in whom the one great Society of the noble living and the noble dead has believed, less real, less sure, for us?

There are times when scepticism seems to be approaching a world-wide triumph, when men fear that if the Son of Man were to return He would scarce find faith upon the earth. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Bishop Butler complained that it had come to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity was not even so much as a proper subject of inquiry, but that it was at length discovered to be fictitious. That period was followed by

* All these cases, and many more, are recorded in various chapters of "The Psalms in Human Life," by R. E. Prothero.

the Methodist revival which saved England from hell. We who have reached middle-age remember that when we were boys Bradlaugh-materialism stormed at the doors of the Churches; while, a little later, perhaps, a cultivated Agnosticism sneered politely at our old-fashioned faith. We have lived to see Bradlaugh-materialism abandoned, repudiated, forgotten—until whipped into spasmodic pretence of life for a year or two years by an erratic journalist—and the deep thought and high culture of our time turning again to God. No atheistic movement has the slightest evil influence upon the general progress of religion in the world. Individuals are affected. Individuals lose their heads. They lose their faith. They are lost to name and fame and use. For them it is great, sad loss. But the human heart cries out its need of God; the weary soul comes back to Christ. Has anything happened, for the need is greater, to make the hope less sure?

In two conspicuous particulars is our world different from that old world in which our fathers lived. We have seen born, grow, flourish, a literary criticism of the Bible. What has that done for us? It has made the Bible more real, more precious, in the deepest sense, more true, its men and women realer flesh and blood, human brain and immortal spirit, than ever before. It is more emphatically a true Book, it is more vitally the Book of God. For our teachers, who are experts, and for us who are only students, literary criticism of the Bible has

made us understand our Bible better and love it more.

We have seen born, grow, flourish, a new philosophy of the universe. We have adopted, on evidence and authority which seem acceptable to our reason, the evolutionary account of the "becoming" of things. And with what result? Why, that instead of looking for a lonely, solitary God, who sits outside the universe, watching it go, we have found a God immanent in all things, in all life, a God around us, within us, who is the life of all things, in whom we live and move and have our being. This God has Jesus taught us to call Father, and he who seeks Him finds.

Nothing has happened to make this God less real, less sure.

Then, that which has been the inspiration of heroic lives, their strength, their hope, their comfort, their joy: is this not worth having now? Trouble will come. Sorrow will strike. Strength will ebb. The hour of loneliness and darkness waits. These men whom I have named, and millions more, have indisputably found somewhere, somehow, strength and comfort, inspiration and hope. Is it no longer worth possessing?

Two things may be answered in objection. One is that "we have had to give up many beliefs which our fathers held; and it is no warrant of the truth of a proposition to say that some of the great characters of history believed in it. Every man living, who thinks at all, has abandoned some things which our fathers

thought." Yes; if that objection had not been actually put to me in so many words I should have suspected myself of inventing it for the sake of answering it, so entirely does it lead back to my plea. Why have we abandoned ideas, beliefs, opinions, which for ages have been current amongst men? *They have been displaced by something richer, more fruitful, grander.* What is to displace the faith in God which has made and kept men great? What is the richer, more fruitful, grander inspiration than that of trust in Him? What message, better than that of Christ, shall I take to the dying soul? Whose words, richer than His, shall I speak to a breaking heart? I will abandon this old-world belief with no regret when I have a truer to put in its place. But until then, to whom shall I go but unto Christ? He has the words of eternal life.

And the other thing is this. It may be said, "But still we cannot believe. And while we do not believe it true, we cannot profess that we do." Then is it not a loss, a real loss, to you? And should you not so regard it? I would not boast of it if I were you. I would not pose as a gainer, when I was a loser of that which to better men than myself had been the one possession which made life worth living. I would not glory; I would mourn. And I pray you, consider whether it would not be well to seek again this precious treasure of a faith that braces, nerves, comforts, inspires, brings heaven

down to earth. That is wisdom. And he who willeth to do His will shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God. The promise stands. "If ye abide in My word . . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Strength is not to be discovered in a flash in the moment when trouble comes. It has to be accumulated beforehand. When the storm comes you cannot build your refuge. You must build it in the daylight, when the sun shines. When friends turn away from you, and you are very sad and weak and lonely, when a mysterious illness paralyses the activities of which you were so proud, and you, who, when you were young, moved as you would, now must be bound and carried where men will, or must go softly all the days that remain, waiting for death as release, you cannot conceive and create and produce out of nothing the radiant faith from which is born an inexhaustible hope and an unfailing strength! It is our yesterdays which empty themselves into our to-day. In youth, young manhood, robust maturity, we have laid hold on God. In the hour of our need He keeps His loving hold on us. Learn the lesson, dear ones! To-day, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Of this splendid faith, the ordinance of Baptism which we are about to observe is the symbol and the pledge. To see this rite as Jesus saw

it, no act of human life could be more solemn, none greater, none fraught with mightier meaning for the soul. With these words upon our lips we go down into the Baptismal waters, "Lord, into thine hand I commend my spirit," with these upon our heart we rise to walk in newness of life. It is not for death but for life we speak them, not from the depths of despair but from the heights of vision, rapture, consecration. With the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs, we commend our spirits to God. Yet our steps do not lead to torture, the scaffold, or the stake, nor are our eyes closing in death. No; but in strength and hope and joy, in the power and pride of life, with work to do for men and praise to win from God, with free minds to serve Him and warm hearts to love Him, we speak the old, heroic vow, "Lord, into thine hand I commend my spirit."

VI

THE JUDGMENT DAYS OF GOD

The grand question still remains, Was the judgment just? If unjust, it will not and cannot get harbour for itself, or continue to have footing in this Universe, which was made by other than One Unjust. From all souls of men, from all ends of Nature, from the throne of God above, there are voices bidding it, Away, away! Does it take no warning; does it stand, strong in its three readings, in its gibbets and artillery-parks? The more woe is to it, the frightfuller woe. It will continue standing for its day, for its year, for its century, doing evil all the while; but it has one Enemy who is Almighty: dissolution, explosion, and the everlasting laws of Nature incessantly advance towards it; and the deeper its rooting, more obstinate its continuing, the deeper also and huger will its ruin and overturn be.

—THOMAS CARLYLE.

VI

THE JUDGMENT DAYS OF GOD

"Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out."—JOHN XII. 31.

THIS men do not believe. Judgment has been thrust back to some time and place beyond the grave. We think judgment belongs to the end of the world. But Christ taught another view. Now is the judgment—*here* and *now*. And because judgment is already at work, the casting out of the prince of this world—which has already begun—is sure. Judgment *is*: the casting out *shall be*. All the methods of God are gradual. Evolution is always His plan. In the building of the petals of a flower, as in the formation of beds of coal; in the redemption of a single soul, as in the wide-spread triumph of His truth, He moves by slow and ordered steps. The Great White Throne is already set; swiftly, though seeming slow to our impatient gaze, His angels are bringing before Him all things that cause stumbling; the nations are gathering from the East and from the West; we are all standing before the Judgment Seat of God, and very surely the prince of this world shall be cast out.

But it is a different kind of judgment which has appealed to the imagination of Christendom.

And although men do not to-day believe that any such judgment as that which has been pictured to them in past ages will ever really take place, they still believe that they believe what has become incredible to them. Between that which men believe with a realising earnestness, in such a way that it becomes a part of their intellectual and spiritual make-up and profoundly influences their actions and their character, and that which they merely hold as a doctrine put before them by creeds or by society, which they have never analysed, never absorbed, never made their own, we need always to distinguish. And in this loose, unrealised way men still suppose that they believe in a future judgment. It has, however, grown unthinkable to them; and when once they begin to think they repudiate it. But the true view of judgment, the Scriptural view, the view held and taught by our Lord, still needs elucidation and enforcement.

The old conception of the Judgment is best seen in the great paintings of the Middle Ages, those paintings which constitute, really, the literature of an age which had no literature as we understand it. In Munich there is a hateful picture by Rubens of Christ threatening a ruined world. He is hurling the lightnings down upon the globe, with its crowds of shivering, shuddering wretches cowering before Him. St. Francis is there, seeking to restrain His fury. Mary is there, baring her breast and appealing to the fact of her motherhood that she may win

Him to mercy! But the two pictures which have most greatly impressed the mind of Europe are Orcagna's, in the Campo Santo of Pisa, and the terrible production of Michael Angelo's genius at Rome. The first dates from the fourteenth century; Angelo's comes two hundred years after. Michael Angelo's picture has numerous features of Orcagna's, and it has many added atrocities which are all its own. An angry Christ stands pointing with His left hand towards the wound which the spear had made in His side; His right arm is lifted to strike and sweep away the crushed and agonised figures at His feet. Angels bring in the cross on which He suffered, the scourge, the crown of thorns, to fire His hate and vengeance! The martyrs produce the evidence of their sufferings with the same purpose of assuring the condemnation of their persecutors. The lost are driven backwards by fighting angels, who force them into the pit; demons drag them into the abyss. Orcagna paints "the monstrous hell of mediæval fancy. It is represented in all its cruel and brutal realism, a slaughter-house of everlasting vivisection, a reeking hotbed of abhorrent atrocities, in every sense of the word revolting and abominable." Angelo's is "a horrible nightmare in colour." *

Modified, necessarily, by the nobler spirit of our day, such a conception is the one that starts before us when we use the words, "the Last Judgment." We do not think of the bestial

* Farrar's "Christ in Art."

horrors which appealed to the fancy of these old painters; but we do think of a spectacular assize, a great glorified Old Bailey, Jesus Christ the presiding Judge. And against that traditional view needs to be set the real teaching of the Scriptures and of Christ concerning the judgment of the world.

Misconceptions of the nature of the judgment of the world are bound up with misunderstandings of the Second Coming of Christ. The Scriptural teaching concerning the judgment can best be studied in connection with its utterances upon the Second Coming.

The early Church, as we know, believed that the coming of the Lord was near. The disciples looked for an immediate appearing. Home and business were neglected; minds ran riot in the expectation of the immediate end of the world. The Apostle Paul needed to tell the members of the Thessalonian community that they had better study to be quiet, and mind their own business. The extravagances into which their belief led them were many and gross. But the gain was doubtless great as well, and a tremendous earnestness of faith was represented by their fervent belief in the early coming of the King. The Apostles looked for His coming. It is the mere disingenuous trick of the controversialist with an untenable position to maintain which leads to a denial of this. The Apostles unquestionably thought that the end of the world, the beginning of the reign of Christ,

was near. In the lifetime of that generation they looked for the appearing of their Lord. And Christ had repeatedly spoken of His return as near. You cannot read His many utterances without feeling that He spoke as though He must come again while the generation that had known Him in the flesh still lived upon the earth. And what shall we say of this belief and of this teaching? That Christ was in error? Never; but that we have misunderstood; that He meant what He said; that He knew that He would come again; that He has come, has fulfilled, is fulfilling, His word; that He is with us, ruling in our hearts, reigning in His Church, ordering the hosts of God, inspiring the soldiers of the cross, winning victory after victory for righteousness, and truth, and love. Ever more and more fully as He perceives the wisdom and the need He puts forth His power; every outpouring of beneficent and reforming zeal is the manifestation of His presence and the assertion of His will. The Son of Man is already seated on the throne of His glory. Now is the judgment: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

What do we mean when we speak of judgment? Or rather, what do the Scriptures mean when they speak of judgment, and especially what does Christ mean?

The first idea is that of a *Righteous Sentence*. The Old Testament idea, the dream of the prophet and the seer, lives in this conception.

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When the Hebrew poet saw wrong triumphant and right overthrown, he yet looked for a time when a righteous sentence, rewarding and punishing, should be pronounced upon this earth. "But the Lord," he declared,

But the Lord sitteth as Judge for ever:
He hath prepared His throne for judgment.
He shall judge the world in righteousness,
He shall minister judgment to the nations in truth.

Free from the impurity of human tribunals, their partiality, their limited vision, their failures from incompetency and incompleteness, the judgments of the Lord should be righteous altogether. When the King reigns in righteousness and the eyes of them that have oversight are no longer closed, then the vile person shall no more be called noble, nor the churl be said to be bountiful. Men may judge by outward appearance; but the Lord looketh upon the heart.

Those of you who have seen "Hamlet" performed, especially if you have seen it in the hands of men of ability and character, have been, I am sure, strangely impressed by the prayer which the guilty king essays to make as he kneels alone on the darkened stage. With all his soul crying out for mercy, he seeks to assure himself that all may yet be well.

What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood—
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow?

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And yet he knows that there is no prayer that he can offer likely to be heard in those "sweet heavens" since

I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder—
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.

And then, with an insight into the laws of God which is like the deep spiritual vision of some Old Testament saint, the conscience-stricken king is made to say:

In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling—there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence.

That is a lesson we shall do well to learn. You may deceive those who know you best; you may conceal from those that are nearest the lie that you are living; you may cloak your shameful intrigue, your self-gratification, your double dealing, with hypocritical cunning, but you will not deceive that Just Judge. *There* is no shuffling! *There* the action lies in its true nature! To-day you stand before the judgment seat of God. He knows from what vice, from what cleverly contrived dishonesty, you have risen, what sin you contemplate for tomorrow's sun!

The second idea included in the conception of judgment is that of *Retribution and Reward*—the righteous execution of the righteous sentence which the Just Judge has pronounced. This is of the very essence of judgment; this is a deep-rooted fact in the experience of mankind. "God does not always pay wages on a Saturday," says the homely proverb. No; but He does pay wages, and the wages of sin still are death. God needs no great assize, asks for no public prosecutor, waits for no dramatic judgment-day. Every act of sin is self-destructive. It carries with it the force for its own revenge. Not every violation of the law is followed by a visible stroke of retribution; but in the inmost being of the wrong-doer is stored the potency of future judgment. And these potencies, accumulating with the years, gaining in intensity and in violence, prepare the inevitable disaster. It may be long in coming, but it comes. You may sin with a high hand and with determined purpose. You may live as though conduct were nothing, you may live as though there were no God. But you will find that the universe is controlled by a great and righteous law; nay, that it incarnates that law and executes its own decrees, that fire and sword and pestilence and famine are not the only instruments of Divine administration, that within yourself is the fountain of suffering, that

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us.

With men and nations this law holds. Some of you have read Zola's "Downfall"—a book which ought to be read by every thoughtful man and woman—and you have seen how God deals even yet with a nation that forgets Him. "The Downfall" is a work of superb genius, of genius directed at last to a useful end. Sedan is the logical outcome of the vice and crime of the nation. The overthrow of the Second Empire, the loss of provinces, the expenditure of hundreds of millions of treasure, the sacrifice of human life, the outburst of revolutionary hysteria when Paris demonstrated the truth that nations, like individuals, can quite go mad, the orgies of cruelty wherein wallowed alike both order and anarchy, the flaming city, the humiliated people, follow in the way of inevitable sequence upon the frivolity and passion, the greed of gold and lust of the flesh, in which Paris had delighted. And these, also, followed upon the callousness and cynicism of other generations. Sedan and Paris are but the "punctuation marks," as Dr. Whiton would say,* pointing off spiritual periods in which judgment against sin has been recorded, and through which it has been approaching its outward consummation. This, too, is the experience of the man who forgets God. He has been storing up the explosives which shall bring about the great

* See that most thoughtful and suggestive study of the Resurrection and the Judgment, "Beyond the Shadow," by James M. Whiton, Ph.D.

catastrophe. He is *mined*. Deceit, treachery, cruelty; a career of gambling, of dishonesty; reckless trading which has become unjustifiable speculation, speculation which has become brigandage; base slavery to passion; betrayal of the ignorant; the "sowing of the wild oats"; the service of Satan—these are judged in the judgment which now is, the execution of the sentence is proceeding in secret; then comes ruin—crashing, complete, overwhelming!

First, the sentence, then the execution of the sentence, third, the revelation to the conscience of this Divine order under which we live—this is the Scriptural view of judgment. It is not enough that the sentence should be righteous, and that it should be executed upon us. We must perceive that this is the judgment of the Most High against iniquity, that we have reached the "day of wrath for which we have been treasuring up wrath, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

The objection which will occur to many minds is this: "All this may be true, but it in no way touches the question of that future pictorial judgment which the painters have tried to depict, and in which we have been taught to believe. This present judgment is doubtless a fact; but that is no reason why the future judgment should not also be a fact." No; none whatever. Future judgment is a fact, but *future judgment is present judgment carried*

on, a development, a sequence, not a violent break and the establishment of a new tribunal. Will you examine one or two of those crucial texts which have been thought to point to something revolutionary in the methods of heaven, and to direct one's thoughts to a spectacular judgment at the end of the world?

And this fact will be, perhaps, the first to emerge, that Christ never once spoke of the end of the world—never! Dozens of texts will occur to you immediately in which He seems to speak of it; but it is only in seeming. Turn to the explanation which the Saviour gives to His disciples of the parable of the sower (Matt. xiii.). In the margin of the Revised Version is found the information that the Saviour spoke, not of the end of the world, but of the consummation of the age, or of the ages. The truth is that there are two Greek words which we translate "world," but only one which can mean the physical world. That word—*kosmos*—Christ never used. The other word—*æon*—which may be translated "age," though that does not cover the idea, is the one the Saviour employs. And while He often spoke of the end or the consummation of the age, He said no word about the end of the world. And the phrase used by Matthew is the phrase used by the author of the letter to the Hebrews, where clearly it cannot be twisted into meaning the end of the world, "But now once, in the consummation of the ages, hath He appeared to put away sin

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by the sacrifice of Himself." Moreover, those who have been accustomed to think that Christ spoke of the end of the world should observe the definiteness, the emphasis, of His great saying in Matthew xvi. 27, 28, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Before the generation that had known Him in the flesh had passed away some were to see Him on the throne of His glory, His angels with Him! And, turning to another famous passage (Matt. xxv. 31-46), we see Him setting forth with Divine impressiveness a scene of judgment which we must not try to relegate to a spectacular "last day." *Now* is the judgment of this world. *Now* is the Son of Man seated on the throne of His glory, now are His angels—all agencies, animate and inanimate, that make for righteousness, that take up the causes of stumbling, that make straight through the dreary desert of sin and suffering a highway for the march of an emancipated people—now are His angels separating the beneficent from the self-indulgent:

Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the
bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon
the right.

Now is sounding, deep down in each man's

consciousness, though he hears it not, the appalling "Depart, ye cursed," the glorious "Come, ye blessed." And the fateful law that character tends to permanence declares once again that those are going away into eternal punishment, but these into life eternal.

And it is this on which we need to insist, which you and I must remember. Judgment begins here, goes reaching on, travels with us, abides for ever. It is true of life here; it lives through death; it is true of this same life continued beyond the grave. Though I would not work upon your fears nor win you through your lowest feelings, yet a man who loves you and who loves truth can still, with deep and solemn earnestness, urge you to flee from the wrath to come. Be not deceived. Though the brutal hell of the theologian is no more, and the ghastly horrors of an Augustinian slaughter-house are remembered only with a sigh of thankfulness for escape from a notion which dishonours God, yet He is not mocked; whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. And now is the judgment of this world!

But more; I would help you to rob death of his terrors. Death is no accident, no dislocation of sovereign purpose, no interruption of the eternal order. It is an episode of universal experience, such as birth, and, like birth, the entrance into another sphere of activities, but with this gain, that all that has been learnt and all that has been won which is worth preserving shall live on still, with enlarged opportunities, with ex-

panding powers, with an ever-increasing fulness of that life of which here our nerves are scant. When men speak of heaven and hell they too often forget that these are states, not places, which begin now, and are only facts of the future because they are truths of the present time. A good man carries heaven about with him. The strength of brave men sustaining him; the love of good women that ennobles him; the smiles of happy children, God's refuge for man's weariness; the joy of work well done; the felt presence of the Christ; the realised ministry of the Spirit; the approval of the living God completing and crowning his strenuous endeavour—these constitute a heaven amid the gloom and shadow of the present evil age, a heaven which brightens more and more unto the eternal day of God.

VII

MARY AT THE CROSS

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa,
Dum pendeat Filius,
Cujus animam gementem,
Contristatam, et dolentem,
Pertransivit gladius.

Eia! Mater, fons amoris
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut tecum lugeam:
Fac, ut ardeat cor meum
In amando Christum Deum,
Ut sibi complaceam.

—*Hymn of the Flagellants.*

VII

MARY AT THE CROSS

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother."

—JOHN XIX. 25.

THAT "the quietude of grief is sacred," Dr. Martineau once said, no man would think of trying to prove to another any more than he would dream of attempting to demonstrate that "the blush of morning is fair or the heroism of conscience noble." So truly do we all feel the sacredness of a great sorrow that when we see it we turn our eyes away in native delicacy of soul. We cannot separate the sorrows of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as she stood beside the cross to see her Son die, from the sorrows of mothers and of motherhood throughout all time. And it seems to us that there is danger of profaning a holy thing when we permit ourselves to gaze, even through blinding tears, upon a mother's bleeding heart. Love, tender, sympathetic, understanding, love which shares the sorrows and longs to heal, love alone may sanctify what else were deep irreverence. And if this text and sermon pierce, in some tender breast, the wounds which in this world will never heal and which open at a touch, try to believe, dear,

suffering soul, that it is good for us at times to give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

For, indeed, there is a sublimity in our greatest griefs which uplifts and hallows life. And, good Protestants as we are, we need not hesitate to admit that century by century the world's long study of the sorrows of the Mother of Jesus has been charged with blessing for mankind. Women have been sheltered and protected and honoured and loved, and Woman has been enthroned; men have been softened and chastened and subdued to gentleness, and Man has been ennobled, by the world's worship of Mary. Her real womanhood has come into the imagination of the poet and the churl, the theologian and the village child, and has preserved for Christianity and for the race some elements without which Christianity would be a cruel and a hateful thing, and the race would be poor indeed. Perhaps, as her Son hung upon the cross and His life-blood dripped to the ground before the mother's eyes, if some strange power of prescience had enabled her to rend in twain the veil that hides the future from all human sight, and she had seen her own sorrows, like that redeeming blood, flowing in streams of mercy over half a world, while yet the sword pierced her own heart, also, her lips would have framed again the words of her adorable *Magnificat*, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." And such a thought may

enable us to touch with reverent hand these sacred griefs.

It is terrible for a mother to see her son die. The lot is common, and no common hand can wipe away a mother's tears. But this death united in itself all forms of known atrocity. It seems as though death by crucifixion had been devised and adapted to inflict the maximum of pain, shame, horror, and fear which human nature can endure. Such descriptions as I have read fill my soul with anguish, and I will not torture you with their recital. But this frightful death was but the climax of a long series of outrages, from the sight of which one turns away in pain unspeakable. I think of the mock tribunals, the perjured witnesses, the savage blow, the cruel scourging, the crown of thorns; I think of the raging hatred that burst forth against Him, the gentlest and most lovable that earth has seen—and Mary stood beside the cross!

What an end to all the mother's dreams, the mother's joy and pride! The angel that whispers to young mothers bright hopes for their first-born had bidden her believe that her Child should be great, and should be called the Son of the Highest. For Him a throne was waiting, the throne of the house of David. But His kingdom should be like no other that mortal eye had seen—of His kingdom there should be no end. In lowliness her Child was born; the manger bare received Him. But still sang on

the angel's song, "Glory to God in the highest," and the story of this wondrous birth was tidings of great joy. Just men and devout, of a type that every formative age produces, lonely watchers for the morning through a night of fear, waiting for the consolation of Israel, had blessed her for the blessing that she bore. And one, whose dying eyes read clearest, uttered his glad thanksgiving, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." The fulfilment of these radiant dreams was slow in coming. Yet the long years are short when a mother sees her boy grow in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and men. *He* was but the village carpenter; yet there was childish prattle and boyish talk for her to ponder in her heart. Then came the glorious manhood in its serenity, its matchless sweetness, its mighty charm. It was coming true at last, the angel's whisper in her girlish dreams, the song that broke in waves of glory from the star-lit heavens, the prediction of the ancient sage—kingdom, throne, and Sonship with the Highest—it was coming true, it was all coming true! And then her world had gone out after Him. Galilee and all the south down to its utmost edge were loud in talk of Him, and the rapt Hosannas of the crowd proclaimed the coming of the King!

And there *He* hangs upon the cross!

The nails have pierced His hands and feet.
The crown of thorns is pressed upon His sacred

brow. The insults of men, like the burning hate of devils, have lacerated His spirit as the spiked and twisted leathern thongs His flesh—and Mary stood to see Him die! Oh, mighty power of a mother's heart, that breaks and yet endures!

This is the deep sorrow of mothers. In a world where thorns lie in every path, is there sorrow like unto this? Naturally, the eyes of the mother have turned from present care to future pride. When the boy is a man, what a strong arm there will be to lean upon! When her heart and flesh fail her, how his strong soul will sustain her! When her eye is dim with age, with what pride it will light up and gleam again as she sees her dear one's great achievements! What interest in his career: what joy in his successes: what glory in the triumphs he must win! And then, when Death dashes all these hopes away—but, no! Only a mother knows. And only God can comfort. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!

Let me turn to a consideration that is bearable. This tragedy is too deep for words.

These thoughts are an essential and integral part of our Gospel of International Peace. There are few of us so callous as not to have thought, in the sober moments that the beating of the war-drum leaves us, of the anguish with which our Imperialism and our conquests rend the hearts of mothers. One of the outstanding

phenomena of European life is the growth of the sentiment of Peace, a desire for Peace, a realisation of its possibility, and a willingness to seek the path that leads to brotherhood. Twelve or thirteen years ago, amongst a group of people who knew the Continental nations better than I did, I heard this definitely predicted. And one who spoke, the best informed amongst us, answering the question of a lady present as to why he was so much more hopeful of the growth of the Peace sentiment there than here, made answer, "The women there know what war is. You are not afraid that if our country was at war to-day, to-morrow your boy would be forced against his will to shoulder his rifle and go to the front, and that the next you heard of him would be that a bayonet had been thrust through his lungs or a gun-carriage driven across his head. The mothers of those countries know that such a fate is hanging over any one of theirs. The women know what the blood tax of conscription means." That testimony is true. The prediction has been fulfilled. And one element in the development of this feeling after Peace is the ever-intensifying realisation—self-realisation and realisation of power—of the womanhood of the nations. The heaviest burden falls on the tenderest hearts.

Perhaps the sufferings of mothers through the wickedness of war, like the sufferings of the mother of our Lord, may yet make for the redemption of the world. An English statesman

has asked us to cherish the dream which the poets and prophets have dreamed, to live by the light of the vision which they have seen from afar, to hold to the hope of a blissful day when war shall be no more. Nothing, he bids us believe, will in the long run prove more fruitful of the blessings of peace than our determination to believe in its possible attainment, and to shape our life by our glowing faith.

Such visions are of morning,
Theirs is no vague forewarning,
The dreams which nations dream come true,
And shape the world anew.

And when these dreams are no longer dreams, when the visions are glorious, accomplished facts, then the mothers who have suffered most may yet find that God Himself wipes the tears away, as the thought starts unbidden to the heart bereaved but comforted, "We are they who pay the kings their cruel price for peace."

One anguish the mother of our text was spared. And mothers who hear me have suffered with a suffering which Mary never knew. She was spared the poisoned sorrow which comes from guilt. Her Son was numbered with the transgressors, but she knew Him innocent. Physical pain increased to torture, blood shed in rivers, and emotional anguish such as Mary felt when she stood beside the cross, are less in degree and less bitter in kind than the grief which has torn some mother's heart who has watched the soul of her dearest rot in sin and perish in corruption.

Oh, but we lack imagination! If we could but see what griefs our sins accumulate upon the head of one who loves us well and would die for us, we should pause even while the sin was hot upon our lips. My boy, my boy, do you think what your vice, your defilement, your dishonesty, your ruin, your disgrace, will mean to the mother who bore you? She would face death for you a thousand times. *Will you not be a man for her?*

And this is a view of the Atonement which, as we repudiate the figments and fancies which theologies have twined round it, we ought not to ignore. That was Sin—that which had accumulated upon Him, the gentle, pure, and holy One, the anguish and the hate—that was Sin! And as I feel it, I understand what they mean when they tell me, “My sins nailed Jesus to the cross.” I feel it true. God be merciful to me, a sinner!

But let us return to the stricken mother by the cross. It is not surprising that her sufferings should have appealed to the sympathies of the world. But what does call for explanation is the fact that in the course of the ages she has been singled out for divine honours, has had prayers offered to her—not merely offered in her name, but directly to her—has received a worship at times more loving and passionate than that which has been paid to Christ, and in the art of the Middle Ages has been accorded a glory above that of her Son.

As early as the day of Augustine, the theologians were busy with speculations as to the sinlessness of Mary, as to the fact of it, and as to the method by which it was accomplished. Soon it was gravely affirmed that she had come into life under some divine, miraculous plan, which obliterated from her nature the taint of "Original Sin." Grave "Fathers" of the Church debated this weighty matter, though graciously the Church permitted some doubt about the process, until, in the year 1854, Pope Pius IX. set the matter at rest for ever—for all good Catholics—by a Bull which declared that the notion of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was a truth which the Church was bound to believe. On my study wall I have a photograph, bought in a Catholic city, of the scene in Heaven when God the Father and God the Son, with Mary throned between them, received the news of the Church's rich devotion. Adam and Eve have come from Hades to hear the joyful tidings, and angels with their whips of many cords scourge the heretics who once denied it.

The process of the worship which has been offered to her can be traced with surprising ease in Christian art. During the first five centuries Mary takes her place with other saints, in no way raised above them. As late as the close of the fifth century the heads of Christ and the angels have the nimbus, but not that of Mary. One hundred years later our Lord, Mary, and the angels have the nimbus, while the apostles,

amongst whom she stands, have not. In the ninth century she is enthroned as Queen of Heaven. In the twelfth she is seated with Christ in equal honour. In pictures of terror, with which the Dark Ages abounded, she is frequently shown winning the world from the fierce anger of her Son by the appeal she makes to her maternity. And in the thought of many generations she was enshrined as the ideal of tender love and goodness, the real Saviour of mankind.

Surely there is some explanation of all this?

The world was familiar with female deities. As goddesses and as brides of the gods mythology is crowded with them. Their worship has not infrequently been corrupt to the last degree. The religion of the Hebrews held these female cults in scorn. The God of the Hebrews is a God of Power, Justice, Righteousness, Law. Gentler thoughts came to some of the prophets and poets of the Hebrew race, thoughts that at times leaped to the ascription to Jehovah of characteristics almost fatherlike, and some, even, which boldly claimed for him the tenderness of a mother's heart. But these great thoughts were not common in the Jewish faith. Christ came, and early in the history of His Church theology magnified every element of sternness, pushed back and out of sight His great, redeeming love. What, at its worst, the Hebrew had seen in God, that, exaggerated, intensified, made awful and wrathful and bitter, the theologians saw in Christ, until at last the world's Redeemer had become the world's

fierce judge, and He who had died to save now lived to damn. Yet "the heart has its reasons," says Pascal; and the heart, thank God, has its theologies! And Mariolatry is the effort of mankind, guided by a sure instinct of the human heart, to bring back those sweeter, softer, more lovely and more loving aspects of Deity which Christ revealed in His own Person, which the Church so soon forgot, has been so slow to learn again. Mariolatry is the assertion that Power is not all; that Pity is more. That Strength is not all; that Submission may be greater. That Wisdom, Force, Energy are not all of life; that Meekness, Obedience, Gentleness are as divine. Mariolatry is, in a word, in Christ's own words, the assertion that the poor in spirit are the blessed ones, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. They that mourn are blessed; God's comfort is for them. The meek are blessed, for they shall inherit the earth; the merciful, for mercy is reserved for them; the pure in heart, for they see God; and the peacemakers, yes, the peacemakers, too, for the world shall yet see in them the children of God!

This is Virgin-worship at its best and highest. And the world had need of it.

But is it not a reflection upon Christianity that such an idolatry was needed to reinforce its own essential attributes of love and purity and gentleness? Do we not derogate from the true greatness of our faith when we admit this. Certainly, this would be the condemnation of Christianity—if it

was Christianity at all! But, let me repeat, it is the effort of the human heart to get back to that which was deepest, highest, worthiest, most essential and characteristic, in Christianity, which theology had thrust out of sight, but which constituted the true glory of Christ. We need no Virgin-worship. Mariolatry is not for us. We do not need to "make much of Mary." All that human nature has yearned for and thought to find in her is truly found, found in its fulness, in Jesus Christ. He is Man of the woman-heart, as well as Man of the virile brain. In the exquisite sensibility of His soul, the clinging to human companionship, the worldless craving for sympathy which in the darkness of the night stretched out hands of love only to touch the hands that pulsed with love again, in the considerateness which saw another's thought, and read the wish, and smiled the answer to the unspoken prayer, in the overflowing tenderness which won from the unfriendly crowd the note of wonder, "Behold how He loved," and changed the apostle's greeting, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you" to a perpetual benediction—in all this we see the woman-nature exalted to sublimity, and set in perfect poise with the mighty manhood of this "*Strong Son of God, immortal love.*"

Of the blessings which have come to mankind from the recognition in Mary of these most Christ-like qualities of the Christ, I have not time to speak at any length. Let me quote to you the brief catalogue of gifts and graces which Lecky

says the world has won from Virgin-worship—Lecky, the “rationalist,” not by any means a man to be suspected of the errors of Mariolatry:

“The world is governed by its ideals, and seldom or never has there been one which has exercised a more profound and, on the whole, a more salutary influence than the mediæval conception of the Virgin. For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position, and the sanctity of weakness was recognised as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or toy of man, no longer associated only with ideas of degradation and sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere, and became the object of a reverential homage of which antiquity had no conception. Love was idealised. The moral charm and beauty of female excellence were fully felt. A new type of character was called into being; a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and purity unknown to the proudest civilisations of the past. In the pages of living tenderness which many a monkish writer has left in honour of his celestial patron, in the millions who, in many lands and in many ages, have sought with no barren desire to mould their characters into her image. . . . in the new sense of honour, in the chivalrous respect, in the softening of manners, in the refinement of tastes displayed in all the walks of society: in these and in many other ways we de-

fect its influence. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilisation."

And so, as we turn for this last glimpse to Mary, weeping by the cross, I suggest to you again that if she had read her future story, seen the blessings which her name and the love of her would fling broadcast over a troubled world, she might have counted the hour of mortal anguish not too dreadful to be borne. And I ask you to believe that something of all this is true and must be true of the sorrows of your life. We cannot philosophise about it. We cannot reduce it to a system. We cannot give a theory, line upon line, and precept upon precept, a theory of human suffering and human redemption which will satisfy the demands of an inexorable logic. But dimly we see it. Distantly we feel after it. And in default of any better reading of life's mysteries, it will be good for you to hold to this. In some way, the suffering, the tragedy, the pain, the loss, the wreck of life, the blight of hope, all are working out the highest, holiest good. In a deeper, truer way than we can understand, no sparrow falls unheeded of the love of God. He hears our sighs. He counts our tears. His hand is on the breaking heart. Love made the world. Love guides it still. Love will triumph in the end. Your afflictions, crushing, overwhelming as they are, in the balances of eternity are light, and for a moment. For yourself and for your dear ones

and for the race they work out a far more exceeding weight of glory. And this shall be your comfort as you stand, each one of you, beside the cross of Christ, as, in denial of yourself and service of your fellows, you share the redeeming love of Christ.

Foes were wrought to cruel madness;
Friends had fled in fear and sadness;
Mary stood the cross beside.

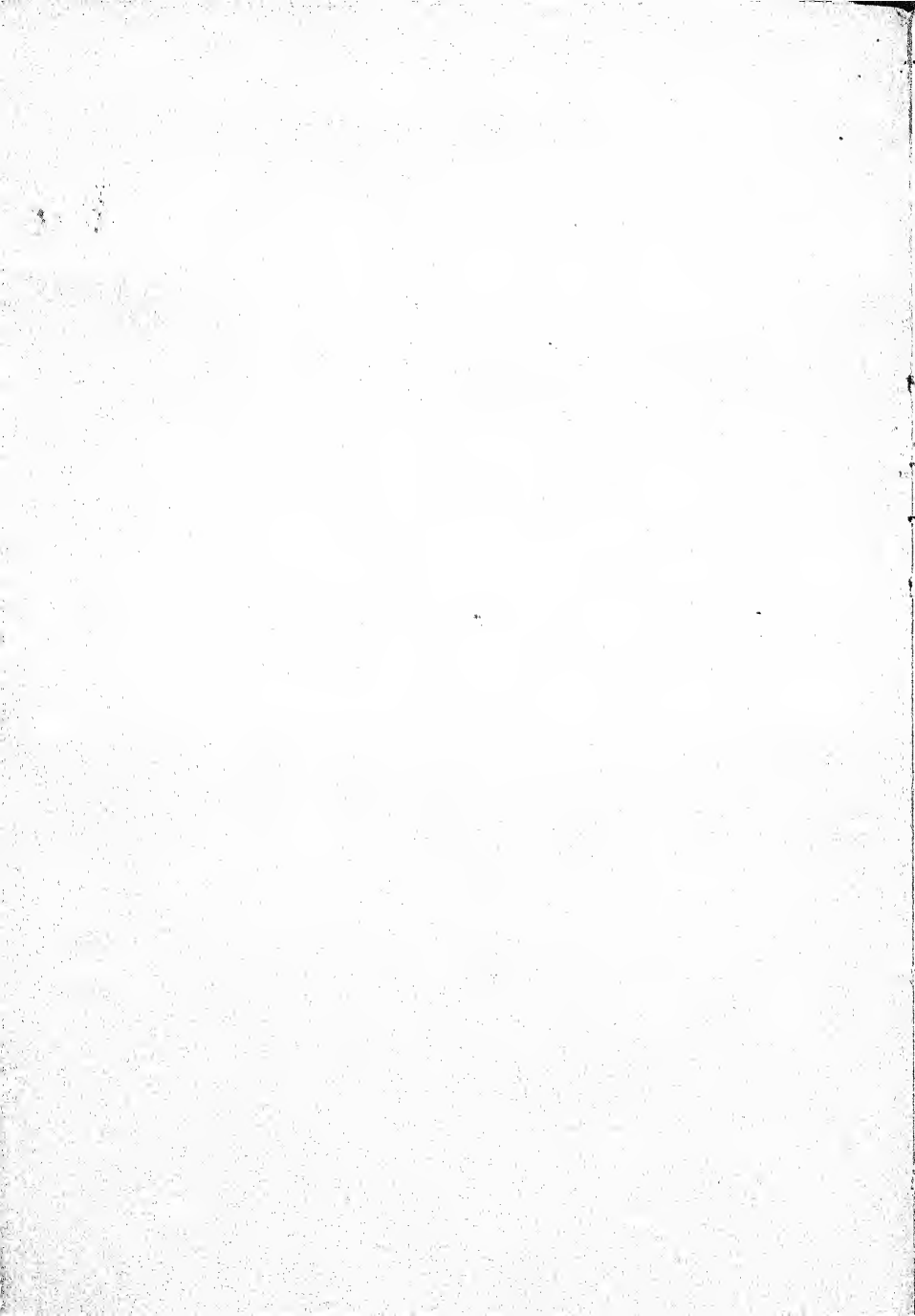
At its foot her foot she planted,
By the dreadful scene undaunted,
Till the gentle Sufferer died.

Poets oft have sung her story,
Painters decked her brow with glory,
Priests her name have deified.

But no worship, song, or glory,
Touches like that simple story—
Mary stood the cross beside.

And when, under fierce oppression,
Goodness suffers like transgression,
Christ again is crucified;

But if love be there, true-hearted,
By no grief or terror parted,
Mary stands the cross beside.



VIII

THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNFITTEST

Don't compete—competition is always injurious to the species, and you have plenty of resources to avoid it! That is the tendency of Nature, not always realised in full, but always present. That is the watchword which comes to us from the bush, the forest, the river, the ocean. Therefore combine—practise mutual aid. That is the surest means for giving to each and all the greatest safety, the best guarantee of existence and progress, bodily, intellectual and moral. That is what Nature teaches us; and that is what all those animals which have attained the highest position in their respective classes have done. That is also what man—the most primitive man—has been doing; and that is why man has reached the position upon which we stand now.

—КРОПОТКИН.

VIII

THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNFITTEST

"Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole? The sick man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."—JOHN v. 2-9.

THE Revised Version has dismissed from the narrative the Angel who troubled the waters, and who troubled, it may be added, many inquiring minds. There is nothing in the story now to suggest that the famous Pool of Bethesda was other than a natural place of healing, waters possessed of those curative properties for the sake of which tens of thousands of people every year visit well-known places in our own country and in Europe. The "moving of the water" referred to by the sick man does not necessarily point to anything but a very ordinary phenomenon. The spring, from which the waters of this pool were collected, appears not to have been continuous, but one which gushed forth at certain

seasons. Then the water flowed into the natural or artificial basin, and the older legend said that an "Angel" had "troubled the water."

The story has for us interest in this, that it affords in a striking incident a crucial illustration of Christ's ministry to the infirm, of His deliberate and determined effort to assure the survival of the unfittest.

The healing ministry of Jesus Christ has endeared Him to human hearts. Our hymns, our prayers, the recollections of our childhood, the adoration of our manhood, the history of civilisation, all unite to swell the chorus of love and praise unto Him whom we delight to call "The Good Physician," and of whom we say with highest worship in simplest words, "He went about doing good." The most critical mind amongst us, finding insuperable difficulties in many of the "miracle" stories, yet gains ground of reasonable faith in the "miracles of healing." The coldest heart warms and thrills at the reading of that simple phrase, "He had compassion upon them."

"A crucial illustration," I have called this incident of the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda; and you will probably agree with me. The man was infirm amongst the infirm. He was incapable amongst the incapable. He was far more helpless and hopeless than the most helpless and hopeless there. Thirty-eight years had he lain there, waiting for his chance. Yet when his chance came, others of the sick, less helpless than he, pushed before him in

the wretched race of the cripples for life and health. He had no friends to help him, had neither hands of his own to use nor hands of his neighbour to borrow. He was the very worst specimen that could be found of a man unfit to carry on the feeblest form of the struggle for existence. Even amongst that crowd of the paralysed and the miserable he was the unfittest to survive.

And Christ healed him. He sent him on his way rejoicing.

Christianity, the religion of Christ the Healer, has set itself, as its Master did, to heal the sick, to cleanse the leper, to cast out devils, to take the deformed and straighten their withered limbs, the blind and give them sight, the worn-out, exhausted, and degenerate amongst earth's children and give them fresh lease of life. Through all its generations Christianity has been doing this. Such work is the high distinction of its greatest days. It is the crowning glory of the age we live in. And when a sceptic of our own times searches continents from sea to sea and history from century to century for proof of some healing ministry before the time of Christ and independent of His reign, and finds one, just one, example, to set against the long and splendid line of ministering spirits who have named the name of Jesus, he calls all the world to witness his wonderful discovery!

But now: When Christ in this way sets Himself to keep alive the weakest and physically the

worst, the most worthless specimens of humanity, has He not set up a process for the deterioration of the Race?

When we build and maintain hospitals, sanatoria, almshouses, asylums for the imbecile and insane, when we apply ourselves to keep alive the consumptive, the anæmic, the weak-minded, the dwarfed and deformed, are we not "going dead against Evolution"—I think that is the phrase—and putting back the hope of a time when we shall see a race of clean-bodied, strong-limbed giants and giantesses, multiplying after their kind and replenishing the earth?

Certainly it would seem that the answer ought to be "Yes" to such a question as this. It sounds savage, but are we not opposing ourselves to Nature's plan? Nature kills off the weak; lets the strong survive. The lopping off of the weak strengthens the stock, for only the strong go on to increase and multiply. And so tuberculosis and typhoid, starvation and plague, are Mother Nature's most beneficent instruments for preserving and strengthening and blessing the human race! Our Christian civilisation, in so far as it is Christian, is a repudiation of Nature's own designs, and a weak attempt to turn her from her course. As such, it is foolish, and futile, and doomed to failure. Yes; and our philanthropy is immoral, too; for we not only arrange for the survival of the unfit, but we allow them to continue the stock, preserving in the body of the community these elements of

weakness, disease, and death. If we are too superficially humane to take the old folks out and shoot them—if we hesitate to shoot—if we have some squeamish objection to take the rickety and scrofulous and ill-formed babies and throw them into the sea, at least we might cease from our efforts to keep them alive, and leave these benign operations of Nature to do their worst and their best!

Well, let man think so, and act upon his remorseless logic, and then—

Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him!

Yet, where is the fallacy? For it is not pleasant for us to believe that the revelation which God gives of Himself in what we call "Nature," and the revelation which He gives of Himself in His Son, contradict each other so flatly. Where is the fallacy? Wisdom is always justified of her children. Christ is her first-born and her noblest. And in His care for the unfit He is even now seen to be justified by the researches of the naturalist and the conclusions of the philosopher. His compassion, going "dead against Evolution," is justified by the exponents of Evolutionary Science.

For we are now told that there has been in Evolution a factor as important as that of the struggle for existence, perhaps even more important. The nature of the struggle, we are as-

sured, has been misconceived; the extent of it has been grossly exaggerated; and this other factor has been ignored. Yet this other law of being has done as much for the preservation and development and improvement of life upon our planet as the one which we have come to regard as supreme, the law of the struggle for existence.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago, a Russian naturalist christened this other factor, "The Law of Mutual Aid." * As a zoologist, Professor Kessler protested against the abuse of the term "the struggle for existence," which was borrowed from zoology. He said that zoology and those sciences which deal with man were continually insisting upon what they call the "pitiless" law of the struggle for existence. But they forget the working of another law, which may be described as the law of mutual aid, which law, at least for animals, is far more essential than that of the struggle for existence. All classes of animals, he said, and especially the higher ones, practise mutual aid. And he went on: "I do not deny the struggle for existence; but I maintain that the progressive development of the animal kingdom is favoured much more by mutual support than by mutual struggle."

Neither this law of mutual aid nor the importance of it escaped the notice of Darwin.

* *Memoirs of the St. Petersburg Society of Naturalists*, Vol. XI., 1880, quoted by P. Kropotkin, "Mutual Aid," Chapter I., from whom this and the two following quotations are taken. For Darwin reference see the same chapter in Kropotkin, and for the Goethe story the *Introduction*.

At the beginning of his work he took care to ask that the term "struggle for life" should be understood in a very large sense which would include dependence of one being upon another. In the "Descent of Man" are some pages written to illustrate this proper wide sense in which Darwin wished the phrase to be taken. He pointed out how, in numberless animal societies, the struggle between separate individuals for the means of existence disappears; how struggle is replaced by co-operation, and how the substitution results in the development of intellectual and moral faculties which secure to the species the best conditions for survival. Holding to the idea of the "survival of the fittest," Darwin showed that in those cases the "fittest" were not the strongest nor the cunningest, but those who had learned to combine so as to mutually support each other, strong and weak together, for the benefit of the community. And he added these striking words: "*Those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring.*" *

An earlier observer than Darwin had caught a glimpse of the truth, and had brought a poet's rich imagination to bear upon the facts. When Eckermann once told Goethe that two little wren fledglings, which had run away from him, were found by him next day in the nest of robin-red-breasts, who fed the little ones together with their own youngsters, Goethe grew quite excited about

* "Descent of Man," 2nd edition, p. 163.

it. He said, "If it be true that this feeding of a stranger goes through all Nature as something having the character of a general law, then many an enigma will be solved." He returned to the matter on the next day, and earnestly entreated Eckermann, who was a zoologist, to make a special study of the subject, saying that he would come to "quite invaluable treasures of results."

With the best will in the world, some of us were never able to join unreservedly in the praises which greeted the appearance of Henry Drummond's "Ascent of Man" ten years ago. It is a charming book, crowded with beautiful illustrations, written with incomparable skill, every page delightful reading, and supremely useful as a demonstration of the fact that one of the most spiritual of the followers of Jesus in our generation could hold and teach the fullest doctrines of Evolution. But the argument seemed to be vitiated at the very outset by the form into which it was arbitrarily forced; and the contention that pity, sacrifice, and love were an evolution of a certain instinct, functional in protoplasm, only weakened the force of Drummond's plea for the "struggle for the life of others." Yet we felt that he had more than established his case for the part played in Evolution in its later stages by what he called "Otherism," the struggle for the life of others, however badly his argument had started. And we saw that he had done the Church a great service in popularising a view which Herbert Spencer, in his own way, had developed before

him. And now a worker on similar yet different lines, approaching the subject from a very different point of view and with different motives, Kropotkin, has given us in his volume, "Mutual Aid," a calmer, less exaggerated, and more satisfying account of this second factor in evolution. It is from his pages that I have taken the references to Darwin and the quotation from Goethe. And you would be delighted and uplifted if, under Kropotkin's guidance, you were to trace the workings of this great law of mutual help through birds and beasts, through savagery and barbarism, in the mediæval city and in the modern State.

But without attempting anything of that ambitious character in the course of a single sermon, and without following our author at all closely, let me remind you of those beautiful everyday facts which never pass from the observation of any one of you. I refer to the help which the poor give to the poor. If you think about this, if you let your imagination play about the facts which you yourselves know to be facts, this is really one of the outstanding phenomena of human life. The poor could not live if it were not for the poor! From the coming into the world of the child for whose coming no preparation has been made, to the last offices of pity for the dying and the dead, this law of mutual helpfulness operates like gravitation! Consider the good-natured, easy-going carelessness of added burdens with which a poor family will take another mouth to feed, another body to clothe,

another life to care for, when death has left a neighbouring home desolate. I doubt whether the beneficence, the charity, the kindness of the rich, can compare with this. It is not wonderful that Samuel Plimsoll, who went to live amongst the poor, said that his feelings were transformed as he came to know the people better; he went with kindly feelings; he came away with hearty respect and admiration. In quantity, this fact is colossal. To-day, there will be a million acts of unnoticed kindness done in our land. Newspapers exist to tell us the unusual, not the usual. And so, although a million deeds of pity will to-day adorn and consecrate the relations of the poor with the poor, no newspaper to-morrow will print a line about it. But if in some gin-soaked slum Bill Sykes should beat Nancy so that she dies, every newspaper to-morrow will tell the story. I repeat that in point of quantity this fact of mutual aid is a fact quite colossal. In quality it is divine.

It might be well to go on to show how the preservation and development of these elements of pity have strengthened, not weakened, the Race. But I put it in the form of a question only: What sort of a race would have been developed without this "struggle for the life of others"? Consider the race of brawny, burly, brutal giants that we might have had! Would the healthier, stronger bodies—supposing we had been able to secure them—have been worth having, among such soulless ruffians as this de-

nial of love supposes? But, as a matter of fact, what has been lost by the preservation of the physically weak has been more than a thousand times made up by the conservation of these purifying instincts of compassion. In Darwin's phrase again, "those communities which have the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, flourish best"; and in more memorable words, "whoso loseth his life"—individual, community, or race—"shall save it unto life eternal." And so through the whole world of living things, in all creation, as far as we know it, from Goethe's benevolent robins to the poor in our city slums, from Kessler's "law of mutual aid" to Drummond's "struggle for the life of others"; from the weasel, in a story told by J. C. Wood, which came back to pick up and carry away an injured mate, to the latest medical missionary who has died of malarial fever in the swamps of Africa, life has spread and branched from more to more, and reached to higher levels, by reason of Nature's determination, not merely to secure the survival of the fit, but even the survival of the unfittest.

There are some observations which naturally occur to one, as he sees in these conclusions of the biologist fresh reason to justify the ways of God to man.

One is that the terrible notion of the absolutely pitiless struggle which is for ever raging amongst all living things, must be greatly modified if it is not abandoned. It is hardly too much to say that the thought of this immeasurable pain in

the animal world has been to many sensitive souls a nightmare. We have accepted all the statements about Nature's ruthless methods, and have repeated Tennyson's phrase:

Nature, red in tooth and claw, with ravine.

Alfred Russell Wallace, in his "Darwinism," * declared that such a notion was entirely unfounded. He said that the "torments" and "miseries" of animals have little real existence; that the popular idea is the very reverse of the truth; and that the struggle for life really brings about the maximum of life and the enjoyment of life with the minimum of suffering and pain. And now these other reflections bring us within sight of another world—a world of co-operation, of solidarity, of sympathy, of mutual help in the lower orders of life—an animal world on which its Maker can look, of which He can say that it is "good."

And in these conclusions, too, we find that which may justify the programme of Christianity. We are told every day that conflict is absolutely necessary to the very existence of the individual and of the race. Man is born for conflict. He grows by it. He cannot live without it. Conflict with our Mother Nature herself, in which she loves to be worsted, and herself in gladness crowns the victor; conflict with the stormy seas, the inhospitable earth, the air, and the powers of the air; conflict which ennobles the individual

* "Darwinism," pp. 37-40,

and glorifies the race—Yes! But conflict between man and man, the prize to the strong arm, cunning brain, and reckless heart—No! In the name of Reason, not less than Love, a thousand times, No! Co-operate! Combine! Unite! That is the word of Nature to us. Come together. Work together. Live together. It is not good for man to live alone.

And this is true for nations—do not doubt it. "But man is a fighting animal," we are told; "and nothing is more foolish than to suppose that there can come a time when the nations will make war no more." We are gravely assured that the first act of a human being upon his entrance into this world is to double his fist. Those of us who have never been threatened by the awful menace of a baby, do not know whether the "fact" is fact or fancy. But we understand the argument so gravely deduced, that from baby's dimpled, doubled fingers to the "mailed fist" of Imperial bullies, every hand must be uplifted against every hand, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, while the ages sink in blood! But War is no necessity of life. Conflict between man and man is not Nature's last word to us. Nay, but *it is Nature herself who takes up the Angel's song of Peace on Earth amongst men of good will.*

In the long run, then, how Wisdom is justified of her children! How right Christ is, however we doubt Him, when we take time enough to find the answer to the puzzling contradiction between

what we have taken to be the facts of life and His great words! You can do no better than read the facts of life through His eyes. If you are strong enough, sit at His feet and learn of Him. If you are not, kneel before Him and accept His word. Your wisdom is there.

And one thing we can learn from Him, we must learn—His gentle pity of the helpless and the weak. What tender thoughts come to us when we sing:

When the Lord of Love was here
Happy hearts to Him were dear,
Though His own was sad
Worn and lonely for our sake,
Yet He turned aside to make
All the weary glad.

What tender thoughts come to us as we stand with Him by Bethesda's pool and look upon the crowd of the afflicted! How did He feel when the wretched man told his wretched story? When He heard that as often as the divine hope dawned upon him, the stronger pushed him by and thrust him down and rushed on to the prize? So must we feel, so we do feel, when we look upon a perverted and depraved competition in the presence of mankind's great throbbing need. "Each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," is the world's base cry. By the splendour of God, we will change all that! Each man for his brother, and Christ for us all!

IX

THE MOST POPULAR SIN IN
THE WORLD

Indifferent people can only wound you in heterogeneous parts, maim you in your arm or leg, but the friend can make no pass but at the heart itself.—STEELE.

IX

THE MOST POPULAR SIN IN THE WORLD

"But where are the nine?"—LUKE XVII. 17.

TEN were healed. Nine went on their way, with never a word of thankfulness. One returned, to kneel at the feet of his benefactor, and give thanks to Him and to God. And he was a foreigner! One decent man out of ten. Where were the nine?

There are times when one is tempted to say that this is about the usual proportion. The Psalmist said in his haste that all men were liars. Carlyle said at his leisure that the population of England was so many millions, mostly fools. When the nation rallied to make David king, and the hosts were numbered, there gathered 340,000 men of brawn and muscle, and 200 with brains. It was not so bad, as things go. The rats desert a sinking ship—because they are rats. When the Greek found a serpent's egg, and in his own bosom nursed it till the young one was "hatched," the first thing the young serpent did was to sting him, because it was its nature to! Our popular proverb tells us that if we lend to a friend we shall lose him, following worldly-wise old Polonius,

"Loan oft loseth both itself and friend." Our popular superstition says that if you save a man's life he will live to do you an injury. When our Lord was betrayed, His nearest and dearest forsook Him and fled.

Certainly, Ingratitude seems to be the most popular sin in the world. Perhaps, because it is so easy. Usually, it only consists in doing nothing. Anybody can accomplish so much. A child can let the fire go out. But the offence of doing nothing is one of the deadliest of the seven deadly sins. It is one of the worst crimes in the big black catalogue of wrong-doing. And the sin of Ingratitude is the broad highway to envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, to the cowardly denials of Peter and the bloody treachery of Judas.

One came back to own his gladness and thanksgiving. Where were the nine?

Shall we agree that ninety per cent. of the human race is ingrate, ninety per cent. careless of the ordinary courtesies and decencies of life, ninety per cent. callously indifferent to the pain which their ingratitude inflicts upon the tender hearts of those who have loved and served them?

We must avoid any such conclusion. Carelessness, neglect, denial, treachery, sin—are all bad enough. Do not let us exaggerate their frequency, or their scope, or their intensity. Our Lord Himself seems to feel some surprise. And that in itself is surprising. For He knew the human heart. He knew what was in man.

It is only twice recorded that He was astonished, once at the Faith, and once at the Unfaith, of men. But here He seems to express Himself with a pained wonder: "Were not the ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there none found to give glory to God, save this alien?" Perhaps there was really more gratitude than was uttered. The emotions of their hearts may have been more gracious than their actions showed.

It is the stupid thoughtlessness of life which brings such pain. Why do we hurt one another as we do? Not because we want to hurt. Not because we hate one another. Cases of deliberate cruelty are, after all, rare. There are perversions of our nature in which the perpetration of cruelty brings actual pleasure. There are no depths to which humanity, once given over to the service of the flesh, may not sink. But in those cases the pain is inflicted for the sake of the pleasure which it brings, not for the sake of the pain which it causes to another. Jealousy and revenge, to be sure, stir men to deeds of violence, in which they inflict pain, and long to inflict it, and love to do it. I am not denying that anybody ever hurts anybody else because he wishes to hurt him. That would be absurd. I am affirming that these cases are relatively infrequent, are few and far between as compared with the ten thousand times ten thousand instances in which we cause each other pain out of sheer carelessness, folly, and stupidity.

'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep
 Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;
 'Tis by our follies that so long
 We hold the earth from heaven away.

These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
 Go crushing blossoms without end;
 These hard, well-meaning hands we thrust
 Among the heart-strings of a friend.

It is thus with our Ingratitude. We have no desire to be brutal. As a matter of fact, we tell ourselves, we really did appreciate the kindness, and we only did not think to say how much we felt! That is all. "I never thought of it!" That is our excuse. That is the fact. And that is our condemnation. We never thought about it! And then we try to comfort ourselves by the reflection that "Anyway, he knew I was pleased and that I really was grateful." It is a large assumption. It is lacking in courtesy. It is dangerous. Why should you assume that someone else will assume this and that? Why should you assume that he—or generally *she*—is competent to divine what you were incompetent to express? Why credit the other person with penetration so much greater than your own? You are not always so modest. And why leave it to be assumed at all? In such a world as this, with its real sorrows, with its heads that ache and its hearts that break, with its humiliating sickness, crushing poverty, shame, pain, and death, why leave unexpressed the kindly thought, unsaid the gracious word, which had been as a ray of

sunlight in a world of sin? When these kindly, gracious feelings possess you, tell your gratitude and tell your love. Where are the nine? For one, lo, Here am I!

I have said that I do not want to deny that base ingratitude is often seen. I have only sought to keep it within the bounds of fact, not to add to its terrors by imagining that it is worse than it is. Our Lord was called upon to taste its bitterness in a thousand ways. Between the carelessness of the lepers and the vileness of Iscariot, He suffered to the fullest from man's ingratitude. In every phase, we see the same ingratitude repeated before our eyes.

We see it in the home.

On this theme Shakespeare brought his mightiest powers to bear. Where else, in all our English tongue, will you find the piteous cry of wounded love which you find in "King Lear"? Where else will you encounter the wild storms which there break over the outraged father's soul? I remember a great critic describing the "Lear" which he had just witnessed, its darkness, its splendours, its rage, tears, pity. And he ended his notice with some such words as these: "And so I stepped forth out of the world of the theatre into the real world of the streets. Real? *But what is real*, if 'King Lear' is not?"

We men sin daily, in our "real" world, not meaning to sin. An English literary man once wrote me a strange, pathetic letter. "Do you not often fall into a rage," he asked, "when you

have had some paltry, popular success, and the people are applauding you; and you know full well that this success is not yours at all, but the success of the woman who sits at home, and on whose strength you lean? I do. I love the applause, and I hate it. I prize the success, and I detest it. I am humbled and maddened when I think that this success is not mine but hers. And I long to see her honoured in her own city and amongst the people who have never known her for the Great Soul that she is!" As if, O my knight-errant of unpraised wives, there is one woman in a million who would care for all the paragraphing and all the praising, compared with enthronement in an enduring, grateful love!

But there is no sex in sin—as Shakespeare saw and showed, and the Hebrew prophet before him. The man who, first in the history of the human race, taught the all-comprehending, indestructible, seeking and saving love of God, learned His deathless truth in the desolation of his own domestic life. Betrayed and deserted by the unwifely wife whom he loved, into whose senseless, unresponsive soul he poured the wealth of his rich affection, buying her back from the slave-market to which her vices brought her, loving her through all, Hosea won his way to place with the Immortals. Change the scene; re-clothe the characters in modern garb; call the slave-market by another name; and the tragedy of Hosea is the tragedy which walks

by your side or—God pity you!—waits for you at home. But when the thorn-crowns of all the crucified of earth are one day exchanged for the diadems of conquerors, the man who has been faithful to a faithless heart and loving in an unloving home, shall receive the homage of great ones amongst the redeemed, and the “Well done!” of his Lord.

You have seen all this, and felt all this, more or less distinctly. And you have seen it, too, in the strange, awful cruelty of which children’s hearts are capable. It is very wonderful. Were the unrealised and unrealisable tortures of the Inquisition more terrible to flesh and blood than the sufferings with which your sons and daughters have wounded your soul? I do not need to quote to you historic instances: my mind is charged with sadness. For as I speak, the memories of the years crowd on me, and I see again what I have had to see in the homes of dear ones, and in the lives of men and women whose sorrows I have been allowed to share. What blows has a boy struck at his mother’s tender breast! What dagger-thrusts has a father received from those to whom he had given life! Have you seen a mother tremble at the sound of the footsteps of her eldest-born? Have you seen the strong head which was carried so proudly in the day bend with shame at night, and the big man whiten to the lips and quiver as an aspen leaf, as the news was broken to him of a son’s or daughter’s fall? O God, who art the

Father-God, who made the mother's heart and made it like Thine own, take care of these men and women who suffer through their children's sin! O God, who dost love us all, keep our boys and girls from the sin and shame which bruise the souls of those who love them best!

I have wondered sometimes whether when we were young we were capable of the cold-blooded inhumanity which I have seen in the treatment of parents by their own flesh and blood. If we were capable of it, were we only safeguarded from the actual commission of it by favouring circumstance? Or were there truly in our lives exhibitions of this deadly temper towards those who loved us? Perhaps this cruel ingratitude is not at heart so cruel as we think. Perhaps, that is to say, it is not conscious, deliberate, understood cruelty at all. It is lack of imagination; it is the sin of stupidity; it is sheer thoughtlessness, not sheer wickedness. Let us hope that this is true. It is bad enough then. Where are the nine?

We see this ingratitude in common service, the service which, in the ordinary course of life, man renders to man in the community.

A strong man says in the pride of achievement, "Never since I was a boy have I been under obligation to any human being." Nonsense—arrant nonsense! You are under obligation to a hundred unknown, lowly workers, and under obligation, too, to the greatest of mankind. You are debtor to the policeman on his round,

the deep-sea fishermen off the banks, the stoker in the furnace-room of the ocean liner, the driver on the swift express or electric car, and the man who drops the fenders between the ferry boat and the stage! Many years ago Rudyard Kipling administered a rebuke to the swash-bucklers of Empire who, in time of disturbance, fawn upon the private soldier as though he were one of the immortal gods descended from Olympus, and then, when the war-drum has ceased for a time its feverish throbbing, treat the same man as though he were the offscouring of humanity. You remember:

Makin' mock at uniforms that guard you while you sleep
Is 'cheaper than them uniforms, and they're starvation
cheap!

And we, who hate the soldier's trade, lift up our voices in demand for just and grateful consideration of every man to whom Society is debtor, for human hearts that beat beneath every uniform, soldier-red and sailor-blue, greasy jacket of the artisan, and nondescript rags and dirt of the man who sweeps the streets. You think that all obligations can be discharged by a cash payment? That you owe no man anything because the toiler is paid a wage which keeps him one-sixteenth of an inch on this side starvation, and because he has before his eyes the assured prospect of a bed in a workhouse ward? That you owe no man anything because you have bought your railway ticket or paid your car-fare

or satisfied the tax-collector when he called the fourth time? Have done with such paltry conceptions of human obligation. We live *by* each other, *for* each other, *upon* each other! Yes, "upon" each other—not as brigands and still less as cannibals might; but each lives upon the sweat of the brow, or sweat of the brain, or great heart-agony, of his fellows.

We are debtor to the Greek and to the barbarian, to men of thought as well as men of action, to the highly placed as to the lowly born. We are debtor to Guardians and Councillors, to Magistrates and Judges, to Statesmen and Imperial Administrators. There is wisdom as well as wit, spirituality as well as sarcasm, in Lyman Beecher's prayer, "O God, help us not to despise our rulers! And, Lord, help them not to act so that we can't help it!" It hurts us to condemn our rulers. They do us an injury when they live so that we can't help it. We are debtor to novelists, poets, dramatists, painters, composers, historians, men of science, men of the microscope and telescope; we are debtor to the pioneer of free thought, the martyr of liberty, the prophet of brotherhood!

Commonplace illustrations of our strange capacity for ingratitude are numerous as the sands of the sea. Where a crowd is assembled, there are just as many illustrations walking about as there are people there.

I have no words to tell the amazement and pain with which a preacher so often puts the question: "Where are the nine?" The light

and easy way in which people hold by their Church obligations passes all belief. The last thing which you think about, when you are taking a new house, is how it will affect your attendance at your Church. You think about its nearness to the tram; its convenience for the shops; its distance from your work. But its convenience or inconvenience for Church—that comes last! How often does a preacher seek out some wandering member of his flock, to be told, “Oh, don’t you know, we have gone to live too far away.” Well, that is an admirable reason for leaving your new house. It is no reason at all for leaving your old Church. And at other times, for a something, a nothing, a breath, a look, a rumour too silly to be contradicted, a supposition which has never had the shadow of reality, you are prepared to throw overboard every shred of conviction and fidelity. It is good for none of us, not for the weakest nor the strongest, not for the richest nor the poorest, to bind ourselves to the life of a great Church with ropes of sand, and repudiate responsibility for it at the first prompting of caprice. And if God has opened His hand and showered blessings upon our path, let us pay our inextinguishable debt of gratitude to City, Church, and Home.

There is another side to this consideration of ingratitude. That we must not ignore. It is as wide, it is as important, as the one which we have discussed. It is: *The spirit in which ingratitude must be endured.*

It is not necessary to minimise the pain with

which experience of ingratitude, developing treachery and hate, wrings our suffering hearts. I know the chill, as of approaching death, which freezes the genial emotions of the soul, and almost stops the beating of the heart. I am not going to pretend that you have not been wounded well-nigh to death by some such deep, tragic sorrow.

But the ills of life must be borne. And without delivering ourselves into the custody of a silly optimism, it is good gospel and good sense to inquire where we may find the right spirit in which to face them all. And I suggest to you, first, that sometimes *the one who suffers from ingratitude has not been altogether free from blame.*

There is a way of doing a kindness which is detestable. You can do a friend a favour in a way to make him hate you. It is a safe rule, and full of profit, if you are going to do a nice thing, to do it nicely. If it is worth while to do a gracious deed, it is worth while to be gracious over it. In a tiny booklet called "Great Truths," the writer, a certain William George Jordan, has a chapter on "The Courage to Face Ingratitude." And upon this very point he picturesquely remarks, "The man who makes another feel like an insect reclining on a red-hot stove while he is receiving a favour, has no right to expect gratitude; he should feel satisfied if he receives forgiveness!"

But now, without assuming that you have in

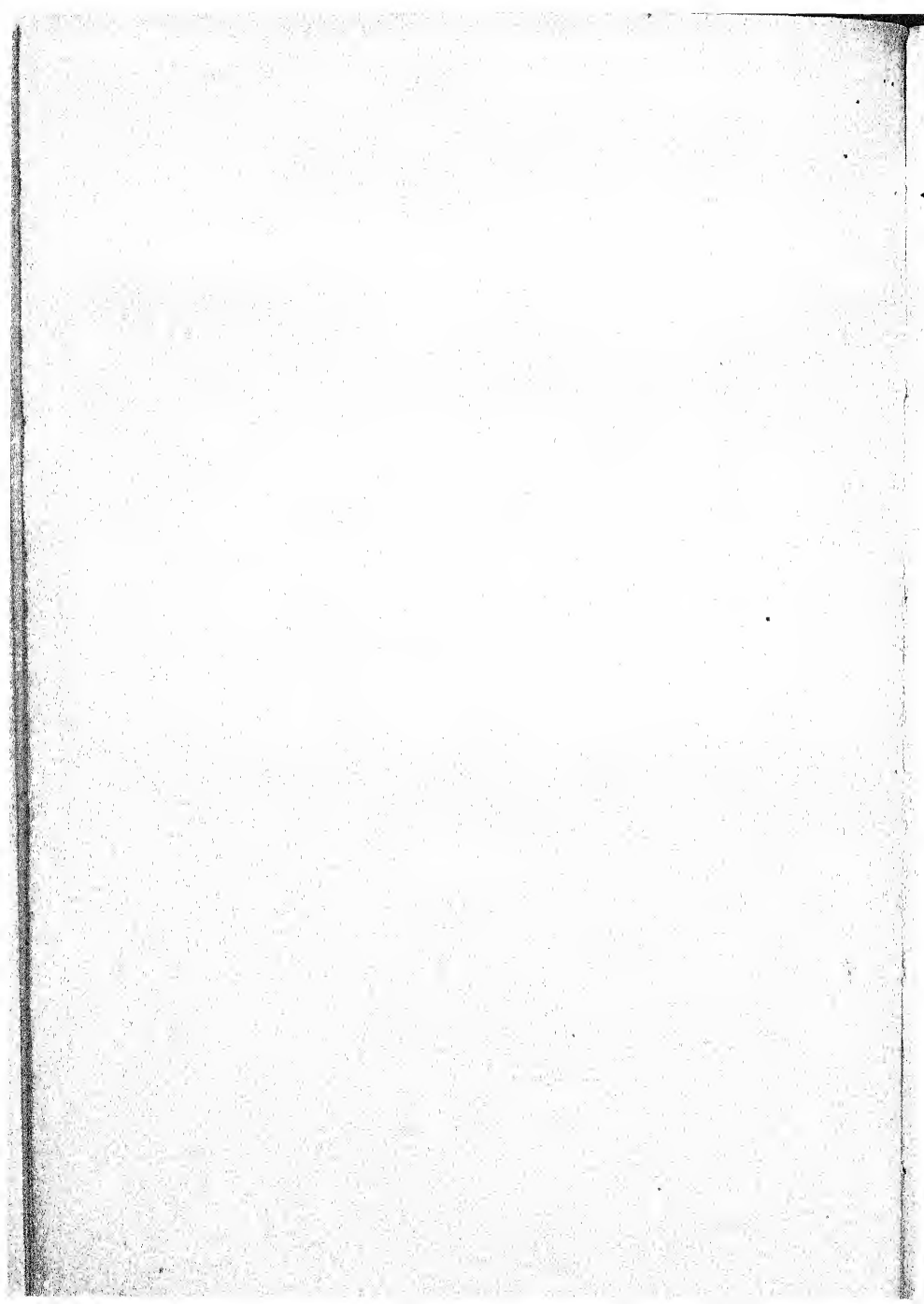
any way contributed to your own discomfiture, nay, assuming that you have not, assuming that your kindness has been perfect with the perfection of the God who prompted it, let me urge this upon you: *Do not condemn the whole world for the sins of a few.* Do not say, "This is human life, and I am sick of such treachery!" How far removed are you from the other man's injustice, when you condemn the human race for the offences of the two or three people who have treated you badly? You must let me quote Jordan again: "If a man receives a counterfeit coin he does not straightway lose his faith in all money—at least, there are no such instances on record in this country. . . . If a man's breakfast is rendered an unpleasant memory by some item of food which has outlived its usefulness, he does not forswear eating. . . . If a man finds under a tree an apple with a suspicious-looking hole on one side, he does not condemn the whole orchard; he simply confines his criticism to that apple. . . . There is too much vicarious suffering already in this earth of ours without this Lilliputian attempt to extend it by syndicating one man's ingratitude."

Again! *Why should you expect gratitude?* Nay; I put it to you in all seriousness. You do not want to serve God on what Jordan would call "a salary basis." You do not want to be good "for a bonus." If gratitude comes, that is something thrown in as a makeweight. Your reward is in the good that you have done. That,

no man can take from you. A good and great man was sore at heart because of the thanklessness of the people whom he tried to help. And I said to him, "Cheer up, old friend! I have been where you are. You have to go on mending people's broken bodies, I have to do my little best in mending their broken lives, and the cabinet-maker mends the broken chairs and tables; and why should *our cripples* thank us any more than his thank him?" "Just so," said my friend, "but if I mended chairs and tables I should have some reasonable hope that some day they would be of use to somebody. But these men and women will never be of any value to anybody in this world." We say those things; but we don't mean them. We only say them from the teeth outward. Five minutes afterward we remember that the acid juices of the unripe fruit become sweet in the sunshine. Of the worthlessness of any human being it is not ours to judge. Jesus thought men worth living and worth dying for. Contempt of human nature is blasphemy against the Cross.

There is one other word to say. If you feel as though your heart was broken by the thanklessness of those whom you have helped, consider. When you live on, in service, in sacrifice, pouring your rich, conquering life into the spiritually anæmic, into the weak, the helpless, and the lost, when you do this amid failure, mortification, bafflement, you link yourself with the truest, bravest, noblest heroes of all time. There

is no courage like this. It is the supreme chivalry of earth. To die is facile: to live so difficult. Oh, how hard it is to be a Christian! To die to make men free is the anguish of an hour: to live to make them holy, the consecration of a life. The essence of heroism is its persistence. Anybody can be good at a sprint. But to keep on being good—that is what troubles us. To be good to bad people, kind to the cruel, gracious to the unthankful and evil, to keep a smiling, radiant face and a warm, loving heart, to hold one's faith in Man undimmed and trust in God unquenched—this is to join hands with the Christs of all the ages, to die with the Lord Christ on Calvary, and by His open grave to live again. The Son of God goes forth to war—against ugliness, stupidity, disease, selfishness, and sin: Who follows in His train?



X

THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD

A Cardinal Legate, sent from Rome to discuss matters privately with Luther at Augsburg: "What do you think the Pope cares for the opinion of a German boor? The Pope's little finger is stronger than all Germany. Do you expect your princes to take up arms to defend *you—you, a* wretched worm like you? I tell you, No! and where will you be then—where will you be then?"

Luther: "Where I am now: in the hands of Almighty God."

X

THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—HEBREWS x. 31.

THE world's hatred of the renegade and the traitor breathe through these terrible words. Storms of human emotion, of human resentment, such as have swept over our own souls when a friend has betrayed us, or a comrade fallen from the ranks, have moved the heart of the unnamed writer of the letter to the Hebrews. That which with the Pagan becomes a frantic invocation—

Oh, for a tongue to curse the slave,
Whose treason, like a deadly blight,
Comes o'er the councils of the brave,
And blasts them in their hour of might!—

with its frightful prayer—

And when from earth his spirit flies,
Just Prophet, let the damned one dwell,
Full in the sight of Paradise,
Beholding heaven and feeling hell!—

that which with the Christian poet becomes an infinite pity for

One lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's triumph, and sorrow for angels—
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God,

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becomes with the New Testament writer a "certain fearful expectation of judgment, a fierceness of fire." To him there seems, for one who has so deserted the Lord who bought him with His blood, no more sacrifice for sin. The death which he would have merited had he set at naught the law of Moses is too mild a punishment for a dastard such as he. He has trodden under foot the Son of God! He has counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified a thing profane! He has rejected with insolence the ministry of the Spirit of Grace! Vengeance now belongeth unto God. He will recompense! And it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

Not for the traitor only, but for all who sin against Law and Light and Love, is it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And it is not less fearful, but more fearful, as Henry Drummond suggests, to us who see in "the hands of the living God the laws of Nature." Neither by the individual nor by the community is God mocked. There is no workhouse, no prison, no asylum, no hospital, where the seeing eye cannot perceive how fearful a thing it is. There is no man who has loved hatred and hated love, no selfish soul sinning with a high hand and a determined purpose, no vicious man sowing the wind of ungodly appetite to reap the whirlwind of Divine retribution, who does not demonstrate to us before the grave closes over his unhonoured dust the fearfulness of such a

fall. The laws which God has written upon the body and brain of man, which He has written with His own finger upon our physical organism more plainly than any He wrote upon the tables of stone amid Sinai thunders in days gone by, are broken by no man with impunity. Every act of sin is self-destructive. Every act of sin is suicidal. It avenges itself. No public prosecutor is needed in such a court, no open assize. But the forces of vengeance are loosed by the act which violates the law. "In this God's world, with its wild whirling eddies and mad foam-oceans, where men and nations perish as if without law, and judgment for an unjust thing is sternly delayed, dost thou think that there is therefore no justice? It is what the fool hath said in his heart. It is what the wise, in all times, were wise because they denied and knew for ever not to be. I tell thee again, there is nothing else but justice. One strong thing I find here below: the just thing, the true thing!" *

But why should we think exclusively of punishment and terror when we think of the hands of the living God? Why, but for the reason that we systematically harden texts and misread facts and interpret the laws of the universe with eyes closed to its gladness and beauty? Some of our most frequently quoted texts are misquoted, and invariably with the result that we narrow God's love and embitter His justice. Why is it, for instance, that when we bring ourselves to say, "Thy will be done," it is in the hour of bereave-

* Carlyle: "Past and Present."

ment, of anguish, and loss? That God's will is to us synonymous with the infliction of sorrow, and our acceptance of it the endurance of pain? Does it never occur to us to pray this prayer amid the splendour of life, in the vigour of youth, in the pride of health, when the sky is bright overhead and all the kingdoms of the world and the glories of them seem ours for the grasping? Amid the whirl and din of life's complex machinery, in its commercial strifes and political contests, when civic patriotism glows fervently and national aspirations are at once tender and strong, and we long to plant the good seed in the broad fields of European democracy, why should we not then pray the mighty prayer, "Thy will be done"?

Do you call to mind the way in which we use—or misuse—the old saying, "Faint, yet pursuing"? When we have been selfish and idle at the worst, or unfortunate and depressed at the best, when the work has seemed to fail in our hands, and we are almost reduced to despair, then we add to our confession of defeat, "Faint, yet pursuing"! But turn to the story of those barbarous fighters, faint, yet pursuing. They were flushed with victory. They were weary of up piling triumph on triumph, of adding glory unto glory—the glory of battle and blood. They had driven their enemies before them remorselessly. Nothing now could block their onward march. And still they pressed on to greater

achievements. They were faint with the strenuous exertion of success, but pursuing still a success which was greater.

Foolish beyond words has been our way of quoting, "Thou, God, seest me." We have told an absurd story about some prisoner or other in a cell somewhere, upon whom, through a chink of the wall, glared everlastingly a human eye. Day and night this eye was fixed upon him, until the man went mad under the unendurable torture. And when we have told this wretched story we have added as a fitting moral, "Thou, God, seest me"! But, once again, turn to the story, and you find that a slave girl, who has been ill-treated by her owners, by the jealous wife of a complaisant man to whom a slave's sufferings were nothing compared with his own peace of mind, has escaped from the house of oppression, and is breathing the free air of the desert. And here in the wilderness the angel of the Lord appears to her, and to this betrayed, deserted creature, a fugitive from the house which should have been a haven to her, brings a message of hope and gladness, a promise of the sacred gift of motherhood, and a prediction of a splendid future for her child, whose prowess shall make him and his descendants world-great for ages. And in her new trust and new life the girl feels what, thank God, many of us have felt and known, that God is mindful of us when we forget Him, and careful of us when we are

careless of ourselves; and she voices her thanksgiving in this happy phrase, "Thou art a God that seest me."

In the same way we see the possible harshness, we see the threat and the terror, in the working out of these eternal laws, and we feel, as the writer of this epistle felt, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But David, human, erring David, had a better idea than this. His offence is rank, it smells to heaven, and a choice is given him by the man of God, a choice of three evils—famine, pestilence, and sword. Which shall he choose? Seven years of famine? Three days of plague? Three months of hazardous and disgraceful war? And David's answer shows him at his noblest: "Let us fall now into the hands of the Lord; for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hands of man."

Jesus, the son of Sirach, had entered more completely into the mind of the Lord than we who only read one-half His gracious purposes. "They that fear the Lord," he declares, "will prepare their hearts and humble their souls in His sight, saying, We will fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men; for as His majesty is, so is His mercy." *As His majesty is, so is His mercy*—recalling Micah's noble utterance that "He delighteth in mercy"—delighteth in it as a man delights in a loving service; recalling the poet's image of Weeping, which may come, but comes only as a traveller

to lodge at night, while Joy comes to dwell in the morning; recalling the prophet's sublime announcement on the part of Jehovah, that "though in a moment of wrath I hid My face from thee, yet with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer; though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, yet My kindness shall not depart nor My peace be removed from thee, saith the Lord who hath mercy upon thee"; recalling the Sinaitic revelation we persistently ignore, that if God visits the sins of the parents upon the children to the third and fourth generation, yet He shows mercy unto the *thousandth generation* (and not to thousands) of them that love Him and keep His commandments; recalling Faber's inspired and inspiring verse:

His love looks mighty,
But is mightier than it seems;
'Tis our Father, and His fondness
Goes far out beyond our dreams.

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty!

And so, when we are told that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, we cannot but assent; but we hasten to add that *it would be a far more fearful thing to fall out of them!* It would be a fearful thing if there were no such laws of judgment and terror as are represented to us by the phrase we are discussing.

If a man could persist in wrong-doing, and no catastrophe befall; if a nation could defy justice and humanity and virtue, and no thunders roll nor lightnings flash, then that would be an evil thing for us, and not good. "If it had not been for the French Revolution," said Carlyle, in often-quoted words, "I should not have known what to make of this world at all." And Mr. George Kennan has added, concerning the shameful administration of Russia, the shocking maltreatment of the noblest of the Russian people: "If I thought this could permanently endure, it would not be possible for me to believe in any intelligent Power, at least, in any intelligent Moral Power, behind the visible phenomena of the universe." It is good for us that we should know the terrors of the law, if we will not learn by the tenderness of love. If we will not suffer ourselves to be drawn by the silken cords of affection, it is well that we should be driven at the point of the sword. If we will not draw back from the danger before us when He breathes His peace upon us, then it is good of Him, and good to us, to light up the abysmal depths towards which our steps are tending by the lightning flashes of His wrath. *We are glad that we do fall into the hands of the living God.*

But on quite other grounds than those of punishment and terror try to think what it would be if it were possible for us to fall out of the hands of the living God. In the Wiertz Museum at Brussels may be seen some of the

most horrible pictures which man has succeeded in painting yet. That strange genius, a worse than Zola upon canvas, whose mind revelled in the ghastly and the tragic, has shown us, with a positively hideous and yet fascinating realism, a maniac mother who has killed, and who is preparing for food, her own babe in a time of famine and siege. I have talked with more than one man to whom the face of that mother has been an abiding impression for years after the visit to the Wiertz pictures, so horrible is it, so revolting. It is the face of one who has fallen out of the hands of the living God! What shall we say of shameful and nameless outrages committed by dehumanised men from time to time, of crimes of ferocity and blood and wickedness unnamable? What shall we say of men so mutilated, their higher instincts apparently torn up by the roots, their godlike faculties, their human faculties even, destroyed, and all that remains bestial—what shall we say of them but that they give us a view of what man would be if that fearful thing had happened, if he had fallen out of the hands of the living God? Conceive the wretchedness of that soul which believes in its distrustful madness that it has fallen out of His hands! Hear him—it is poor Cowper who is speaking, writhing under the horror of the curse which has fallen:

Damn'd below Judas; more abhorr'd than he was,
 Who for a few pence sold his holy Master!
 Twice betray'd, Jesus me, the last delinquent,
 Deems the profanest,

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Man disavows, and Deity disowns me,
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter;
Therefore, hell keeps her ever-hungry mouths all
Bolted against me.

Conceive of this man going down to the docks
to drown himself, convinced that this was his
state for ever, prevented by the presence of some
unusual crowd, then the light of reason returning,
and the assurance given that he was still in the
hands of the living God, and writing:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm!

And dare we enter into the very Holy of Holies,
look with sobered gaze upon the "Strong Son
of God, immortal Love," prostrate upon the cold
ground at the foot of those gnarled old olive
trees, the interrupted moonlight through the
foliage glancing upon Him as He sweats, as it
were, in His agony, great drops of blood? Can
we follow Him along the path of sorrows to
Gethsemane, and enter, by reverent and tenderest
sympathy, into something of the horror of great
darkness which fell, not only upon the sacred
city, but upon the soul of Christ, and feel in
part what must have been the anguish of our
Lord when it seemed to Him that He had fallen
out of the hands of the living God, and He cried
with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why
hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet this was for
a moment. And His last words have been spoken

by the dying lips of myriads of His followers: "Father, *into Thine hands* I commend My spirit."

We are *in* the hands of the living God. We *cannot* fall out of them; in that assurance is our strength for ever. The strongest of us have known, or will know, hours of weakness in which our power is utter feebleness, when we need, must have, cannot live without, a greater than ourselves to lean upon. The most deeply spiritual have known times when all our lower self was in arms against our nobler impulses, when the flesh made hateful war upon the spirit, when the good that we would we could not do, and the evil that we would not we were compelled to do, and our highest self seemed swept away in a flood of evil passions. The most trustful have known times when we have felt that there was no humanity to pity and no Deity to care; that man stood but as "the cunningest of Nature's clocks," and God a "hypothesis" for which there was no need. The most beneficent and philanthropic have felt wearied by their fellow-men, have been ready to confess the futility of effort, the folly of that bad dream called faith, and the worthlessness of the human race. We have needed, or we shall need at times like these, to pray in spirit and in truth the earnest prayer:

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow,

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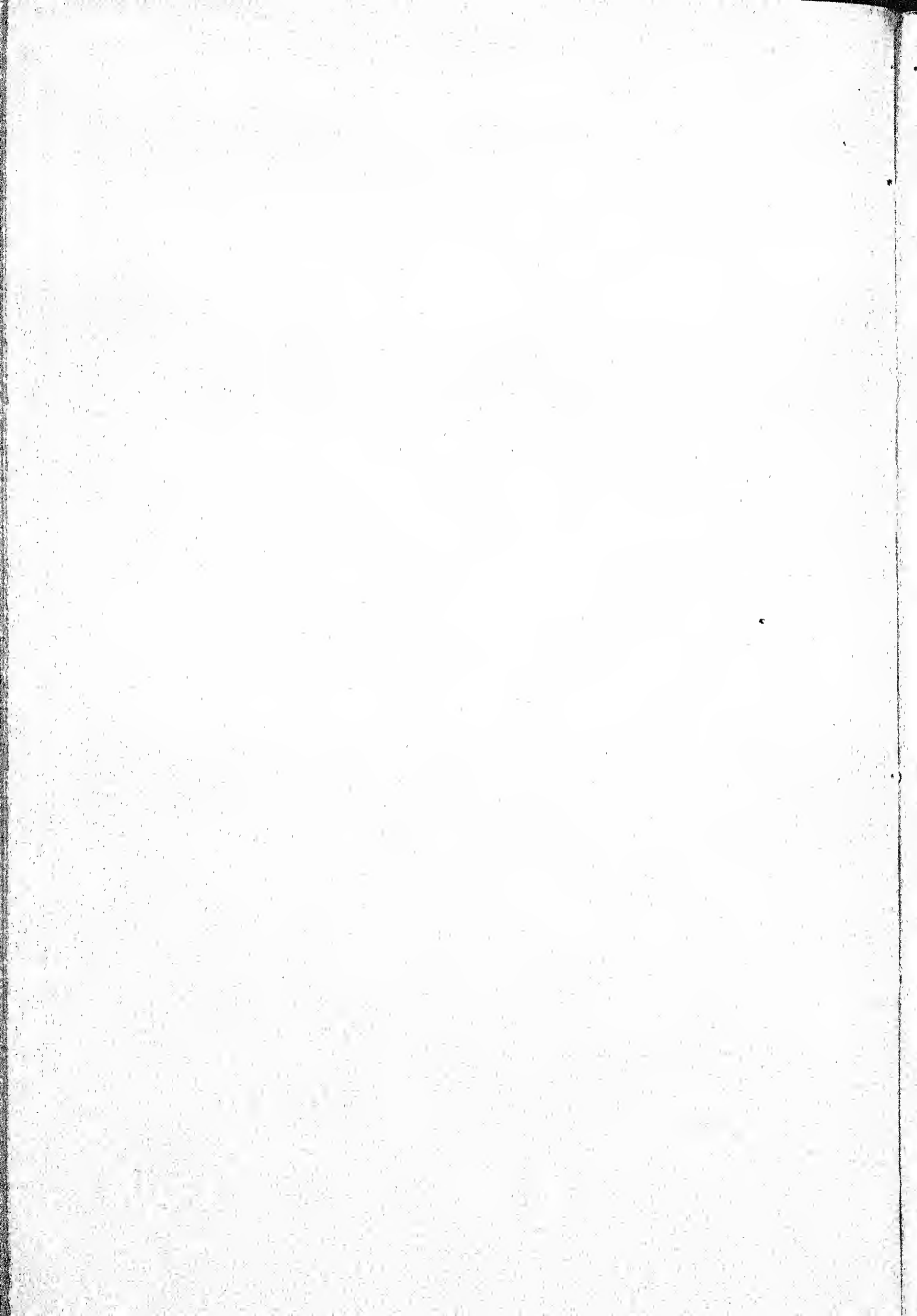
Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And when the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low, dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

And then we have been, and we still shall be, devoutly thankful for the certainty that the Eternal God is our dwelling-place, and that we cannot fall out of the everlasting arms that are underneath. It is in the inspiration of this deathless truth that all strength and virtue lies. We are in the hands of the living God—cannot fall out of them! What vividness of insight, what earnestness of effort, what force of will is in the promise! “Man never mounts so high,” as Cromwell felt, “as when he knows not whither he is going”—but trusts himself to God. He mounts, he knows not how; but the clouds turn to solid rock beneath his feet, and his hand is grasped by the strong hand of his Father, God. His life has been so ordered, is so planned. For this purpose came he into this world—to do his Father’s will. The vastness of the evils to be attacked does not appal him—God is not dead! The weaknesses of those who have fought by his side and fallen in the fight—nay, his own

exceeding frailty at the moment of keenest trial, do not destroy his faith; out of the depths of despair he is lifted up by the hands of God. Evil, he sees, through all the ages reincarnates itself, is routed and overthrown and driven out of national life and human character in one manifestation, to appear again in other forms and in successive generations. But each fresh incarnation, he sees by the eye of faith which alone sees right, is weaker than the last; and he is very sure that Christ will reign till He has put all evil forces and tendencies under His feet and is truly All in All. Death threatens, and his dearest pass through the valley and the shadow; but the promise of a time when he shall clasp the hand that has failed him here, and look into eyes that shall no more grow dim, sounds above his sorrow, and he knows that, living or dead, his loved ones are in the hands of the living God. And for himself, he scorns to live under a threat or a fear; death does but mean for him a broadening vision of the life Divine. In a universe of change one thing is fixed—the love of God for him; and in all this universe of starry splendours and unfathomable depths and unthinkable immensities he cannot fall out of the hands of the living God!



XI

THUNDER AND THE ANGEL

Every matter hath two handles—by the one it may be carried; by the other, not. If thy brother do thee wrong, take not this thing by the handle, *He wrongs me*; for that is the handle whereby it may not be carried. But take it rather by the handle, *He is my brother, nourished with me*; and thou wilt take it by a handle whereby it may be carried.

—EPICTETUS.

XI

THUNDER AND THE ANGEL

"The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to Him."—JOHN xi. 29.

SOME said that it thundered. Others said an angel spoke. But suppose it did thunder: is that any reason why we should not also say that an angel spoke?

Herbert Spencer once wrote that "Evolution is a change from an indefinite coherent heterogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity through continuous differentiations and integrations." And a writer in *The Contemporary Review* observed that "the universe may well have heaved a sigh of relief when, through the cerebration of an eminent thinker, it had been delivered of this account of itself." The Bible says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Well, now, let us assume that evolution is the change from an indefinite coherent—and all the rest of it: what is there in that to prevent us saying, "In the beginning, God"? Herbert Spencer has tried to define life for us.

He says that life is "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." Let us admit it; but where is the reason in that definition for our refusing to say, "And this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent"? Time was when man saw arbitrary interferences of deities in every wind that stirred the forest trees, in every fleecy cloud that dimmed the azure blue, in morning's radiant flush, and in the stars that break up the night and make it beautiful. *We* can account to you precisely for the wind. The clouds are no difficulty to us. As for the stars, we weigh them and measure them, tell their places and their relations to each other, point out in advance where they must be at any moment of time a hundred years hence, and man's intellectual lordship we plant above the Milky Way. This is all clear gain—or it may be. But it is not gain, it is exceeding great and perilous loss, if because we know that it thunders we cannot also hear that an angel speaks, if beyond and behind and above all visible phenomena we cannot find an eternal Mind and an everlasting Love. In this day of an aggressive atheism we, who believe in God and in the Incarnation of His Son, in the resurrection and immortality, cannot too often remind you that science, by the mouthpiece of her chosen prophets, has proclaimed that she is and must be silent as to the cause and origin of the phenomena which she catalogues and describes. In his day, Darwin drew back from

the very contemplation of the problems presented by the existence of mind. "I have nothing to do with the origin of the mental powers, any more than I have to do with the origin of life itself." "I know nothing, and I never hope to know anything," says Huxley, "of the steps by which the passage from molecular movement to states of consciousness is effected"—in other words, as to how life comes to man or brute. The cause of all remains uncatalogued, unaccounted for. Let science push her investigations to the very uttermost; let her wisest servants tell us all they have learned of her secrets; we will listen, will praise them and be grateful to them, and bid them still further search the universe; and when their thoughts have pierced to what is for them creation's farthest bounds, we shall hear them confess that there is room for this First Great Cause whom we call God, whom Jesus has bidden us call Father, to whom ascends the feeblest prayer of dawning faith and the mighty cry of the hero's heart.

To be sure, it thundered. Be far more sure that an angel spoke!

These considerations go very deep into the speech of God to human hearts. There are men and women to whom the old Nature-adoration of ages and races that have passed, and the modern realisation of God through the ministries of Nature, are as meaningless as a speech delivered in Choctaw or Chinese. They can no more understand my feelings, as I roam over the miles

of golden sands that stretch from my door, with all the winds of heaven playing upon my soul, and the Atlantic rollers, which have swept on resistlessly over three times a thousand miles, breaking in tiny trivial wavelets at my feet, than they could express the terms of the differential calculus in the language of Homer or of Isaiah. I have often tried to describe to you—though never with any satisfaction to myself—the view which day by day for twelve months spread before our eyes as we “made the cure” at the Schatzalp sanatorium in Switzerland. One day, a certain person came to my room, bubbling over with laughter. Walking on the mountain-slopes, two ladies had asked her if she could speak English, and when she confessed that she could, said to her, “Will you please tell us where is the view?” Naturally, in her surprise, she demanded, “What view?” It was a glorious day late in summer, and a touch of frost was in the air, while the summer sun flooded the world with splendour. Autumn’s hand was early on the hills and forests. A thousand feet below us the valley smiled in its yet living green; higher, the yellows and the browns chased each other through the pine forests; higher still, the mountain sides burst into a blaze of red and a purple glory. In the vast distance the solemn snow-peaks of the Tinzenhorn and the Piz Aela towered into immensity. And these ladies wanted someone to point out to them the “view.” They

said that they had been told that if they came up to our Sanatorium by the Funicular they would see it! I wished I had been so fortunate as to meet the people who had come to see without bringing eyes with them. I should have said, "There is no view here. There never has been any view here. There never will be any view here—for you! There is a view in Bold Street, and in Regent Street, and in Broadway, and in the Rue de la Paix; but there is no view here. The eye only sees what it brings with it the power of seeing."

One of the happiest evenings I have spent in my life was passed in company with Stanley, the explorer. There were only six of us that night, and three are now dead. And as we talked, or, rather, listened to Stanley talk, one of us quoted a flippant comment on the greatest of his journeys which had appeared in Mr. Labouchere's *Truth*. "Mr. Stanley has found a mountain and a lake. A mountain is an elevation and a lake is a depression. So the one cancels the other out." And that was the result of Stanley's journey—according to this stupid paragrapher. And Stanley was silent for a minute or two; and a shadow crossed his face; and, before his eyes half-closed in reverie, it seemed to me that I could see Africa there, and he saw himself once more plunging out of the light into the darkness, not knowing whether he would find his way to the light beyond, or whether his name and his

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fame and his life would be lost in the ever-during dark. He saw, or I thought he saw, that marvellous journey when they all faced a thousand deaths every hour, and—he had found an elevation and a depression, and one had cancelled the other out, and that was all!

To men and women like these, sand is sand, hills are hills—or elevations; lakes are lakes—or depressions; rivers are drainage; mountains are heaps of land piled up rather awkwardly; snow looks horribly cold; a yellow primrose is a yellow primrose, and you didn't expect it to be blue! What is there so wonderful in all that? Nothing, my dear sir, just nothing at all—if you have starved your soul. But poetry and philosophy and music, the history of man and the life of God—if you are ready to hear the angel speak.

This is the Hebrew sense of God, or, at least, it is the sense of God which the finest minds of the Hebrew race have had. This is the sense of the Real presence which the most spiritual of the sons of men are for ever seeking to express in deathless song. Listen to one of the ancient day:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth His handywork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language;
Their voice cannot be heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.

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Listen to one of our own race:

. . . I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man.

And if you say that this is still quite beyond you, that you really do not know what it all amounts to, try to understand it. Give your soul a chance. "I know that father will not go to heaven," a little girl said; "he will never be able to leave the shop." Leave the shop sometimes, and the office and the factory and the dock and the exchange, and the drudgery of household duties and the rush of the crowded city. "Come ye out into the plain, and I will talk with you there," saith the Lord of Hosts. "Come ye by yourselves apart, and rest awhile," says the Good Physician to our souls. Come, and hear the angel speak.

Now, if I have made plain to you what this text means to me, you will see that we can allow our thoughts to wander over an almost infinitely wide tract of human experience, and everywhere find some who say that it thunders while others say an angel speaks.

One man opens his eyes to the wonderful story of the past. Myth, rite, and creed pass before his vision as the ages are led captive before him.

Myth, wild and fanciful, crude ritual, savage creed, speak to him only of the aberrations of the ignorant, the undeveloped, the superstitious, and the cruel mind. And in them all he sees the denial of God. Primitive man saw the sun set, and it rose again; and so he came to the idea of a resurrection after death. He was lonely and frightened in the dark, and saw ghosts, and so conceived the idea of immortality, *et cetera*. And this rules God out of His own universe, we are told. Let me give you an illustration. Mr. Blatchford tells us that no man should consider the question of religion decided for him until he has read Dr. Fraser's "Golden Bough." Yet there is nothing in that book which remotely touches the religion of Jesus Christ! It does not touch the thing, the matter, of Christianity at all. Such a remark in its absurd irrelevance, its utter absence of reasonable connection with the point in view, reminds one of nothing in the world so much as of the exercises in the old French lesson-books: "Has the gardener's little boy any bread? No; but his sister is very tall." For the "Golden Bough" in its crowded volumes, often fascinating and sometimes bewildering, brings before you thousands of illustrations, simple, foolish, tremendous, horrible; illustrations of every conceivable and inconceivable character, of the quaint and amazing customs which have grown up round primitive man's conception of "worship." And Dr. Moulton, who has probably given to the study of religion

and of history more years than Mr. Blatchford has given days, puts the matter with sufficient clearness. "Let every one of Dr. Fraser's facts and every one of his conclusions be admitted," he says, in effect, "and the religion of Christ is absolutely untouched."

To us it seems that, when the most that is claimed is proved—the most, not the least—we have only been supplied with fresh illustrations of man's earliest searches after God, of the reaching out of the human soul toward the Infinite, of the indestructible craving for a Higher than ourselves. And we have found fresh reason to declare with Whittier:

All souls that struggle and aspire,
All hearts of prayer, by Thee are lit;
And, dim or clear, Thy tongues of fire
On dusky tribes and centuries sit.

It is the same with Bible story and with the story of the Church. One hears it thunder. Another says that an angel speaks. There is a passage in Newman Smyth's "Old Faiths in New Light," a book written twenty years ago, so complete and so completely applicable to some present controversies that it might have appeared yesterday: "Popular infidelity, too, has its arrant demagogues—lecturers who carry on a notorious business of atheism on a small capital of philosophic thought, and usually borrowed capital besides. Thus a man of fluent wit will go up and down through the Bible, or ec-

clesiastical history, very much as a political stump-speaker will look through the Parliamentary records, or our national history, for the points of his partisan speech. He will begin with Genesis and find 'mistakes of Moses' in abundance. He will expatiate upon the absurdities of the story of the Ark. He will pause in dramatic horror before the cruel wars of the Jews. He will single out an imprecatory Psalm or two; and when he comes to the New Testament he will find in it discrepancies and misstatements enough to prove that all the apostles were little better than literary thieves and robbers. Then he will run up and down through the Christian ages, beholding every rack and thumbscrew, but regardless of the many martyrs; putting his finger on the dark stains, but not noticing the illuminated pages of ecclesiastical history; complaining of the gloom of the scholastic theology, but blind to the growing light. He will have at his tongue's end second-hand and unverified quotations from the Calvinists . . . and so on to the end of the chapter." Yes; but to one who has opened his ear and his heart to hear the angel speak, the Bible is the Book of Righteousness, the Book of Love, the Book of Life, the Book of God. He, a grown man, has not gone to it to grin at its "absurdities" and chuckle over its "indecenties." And he has found in it strength for his weakness, consolation in sorrow, and inspiration in despair. The literature of the world is as open to his search as to the "demagogue" of Newman Smyth's illustration,

and he listens for the angel's voice in every truthful speech of man. Yet in the deepest hours of his life it is his Bible that he opens, and the simplest of human phrases most adequately expresses the conviction of his soul:

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,
From the *best bliss* that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

I repeat that we might wander over the very widest fields of human experience, and we should find all this true. You may simply say that it thunders, or you may hear the angel speak. For, indeed, it is the whole tone and temper and spirit of the life which are in question. How shall we take life, on its material or on its spiritual side? Shall we walk by the flesh or by the spirit? Is it thunder or an angel that speaks to you day by day?

You can look on the sordid side of your own work, on the labour of men, on the commerce of the nations. You can see in work only drudgery, drudgery most undivine; in labour, only oppression; in commerce, organised plunder. Or you can see a real dignity, not a sham one, in your work, and find a sustaining joy in it. All work well done brings happiness to somebody. A man who makes a pair of boots which are comfortable to wear has done a piece of work which has added to the pleasure of living. A man who makes a chair easy to sit in has made somebody

happy. A man who papers a wall so that it is restful to the eye and soothing to the mind has left a blessing behind him. A man who builds a house which a woman can turn into a home and love into a heaven is a benefactor of the race. A woman cannot cook a dinner well or order her house aright without joining herself to all the world's sources of well-being; while, I am gravely assured, the girl who has made a hat which is "becoming" or a gown which "fits" properly has conferred upon some happy woman a sense of satisfaction which is only less than the assurance of immortality. And so with the great and wide enterprises of commerce. I would have you think of commerce as a great and sacred thing, bringing the nations into fellowship, uniting man to man, and deepening in every clime the idea of the solidarity of mankind.

Life, with all its vicissitudes and trials, with its adversity and prosperity, you may take "high" or "low." You may take it so as merely to hear thunder. You may listen and hear the angel speak. Does adversity ennoble or embitter? Does prosperity make cruel or kind? I was brought up to believe that adversity was the school of saints and heroes, that prosperity brought pride, insolence, and selfishness. I have lived to be told that prosperity is good for people; that we grow nicer and kinder and really more sweet-natured as things go well with us; and that it is the pressure of poverty, sorrow, and loss which crushes the kindlier feelings of our souls. Which is true?

Both! Prosperity may ennoble; prosperity may degrade. Adversity may sweeten; adversity may poison. There is no rule except this; all depends upon the spirit of which you are. So we come back to that. We are spirit: will you take life on its spiritual side, live as a spiritual being, expect spiritual results from all the events and facts and forces which you work up into the wonderful thing we call experience? Prosperity finds you; and you may wrap yourself round in pride, in disdain of the world's need of help and pity. Prosperity may come to you, and you may long with great longing to shed abroad the happiness which has found you. Adversity may strike you, and though you reel under the blow you may rise to a height of sympathy and tenderness and helpfulness to which you never rose before. Or—God help us all!—we may snap and snarl and bite, like a trapped and wounded beast, while the sorrow spreads like some deadly virus through our veins. How is it with you, brother? What spirit are you of? Do you hear thunder or the angel now?

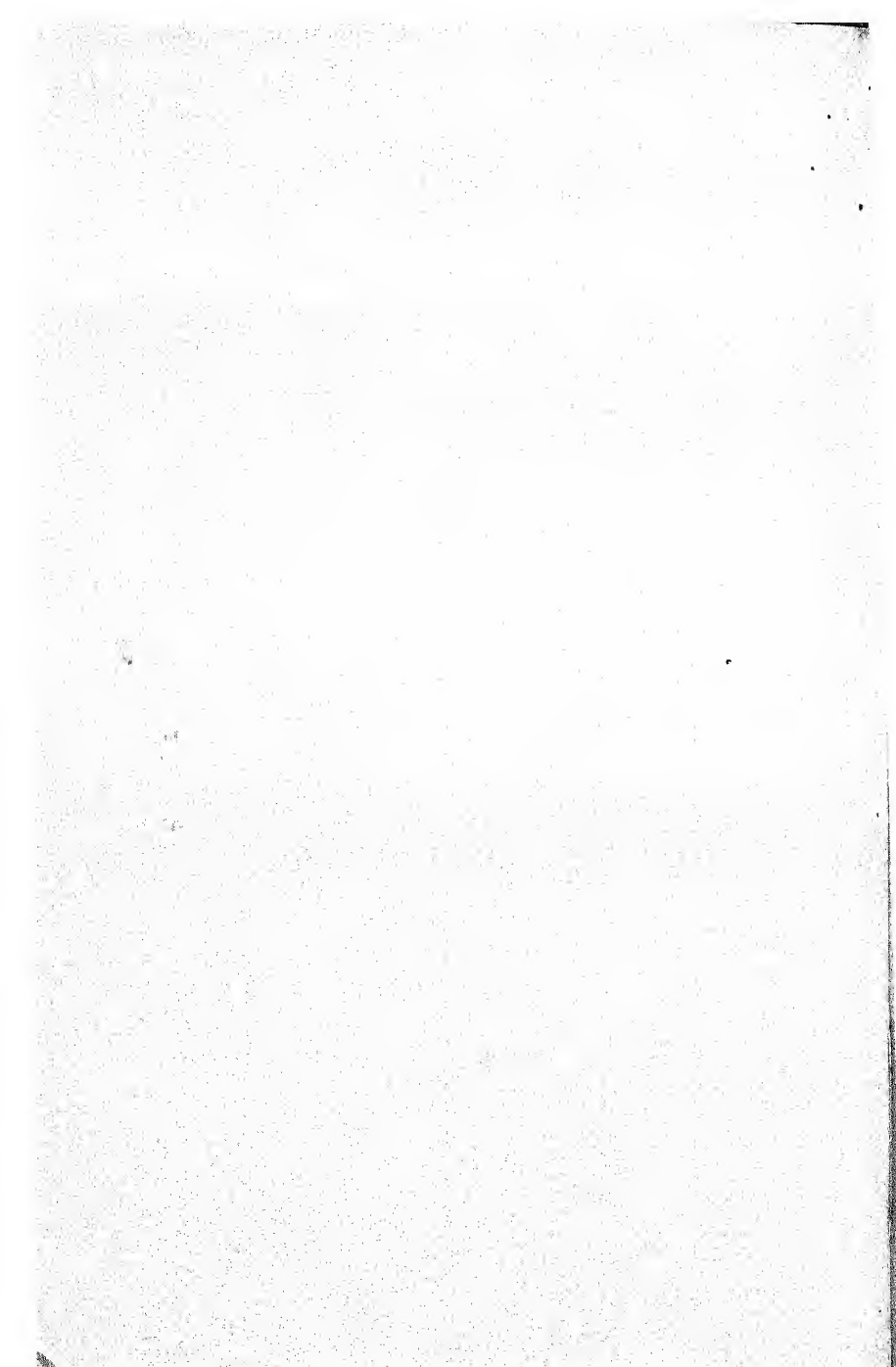
I shall be told that there is no way of laying violent hands upon ourselves and forcing ear and heart open to the angel voices while the world goes thundering past. No; but it is, at least, something to recognise that there are such possibilities of higher and lower in every event and in every hour. We are not forced to grovel. If we have not wings and cannot soar, at least we can climb out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. That is something. But there is more. We may, at the

very least, give a thought to the certain issues of our present life in the years that are to come. Nature never stands still, nor souls either. They either go up or go down. And watch the man who is "going down." He develops cynicism, he is contemptuous of "fine-spun sentimentalities," he is bitter toward the visions of high minds. Or he grows cold, hard, selfish. His soul shrinks and shrivels within him. What sort of an old age are we preparing for ourselves, if we live within ourselves and for ourselves alone? You are not getting any younger. Old age will come. We may grow twenty years older in twelve months. Materialism needs little encouragement in our day. It quickly seizes us. It grips us hard. It holds us tight. The selfishness of our youth and the coldness and meanness of middle age will be damning and damnable when age has stiffened every instinct into permanence.

There walks Judas, he who sold
 Yesterday his Lord for gold,
 Sold God's presence in his heart
 For a proud step in the mart;
 He hath dealt in flesh and blood;
 At the bank his name is good;
 At the bank, and only there,
 'Tis a marketable ware.
 In his eyes that stealthy gleam
 Was not learned of sky or stream,
 But it has the cold, hard glint
 Of new dollars from the mint.
 Open now your spirit's eyes,
 Look through that poor clay disguise
 Which has thickened day by day,
 Till it keeps all light at bay,

And his soul in pitchy gloom
Gropes about its narrow tomb,
From whose dark and slimy walls
Drop by drop the horror falls.

And yet I would not say one word which should lead anyone, though white his hair with the snows of many winters, and heavy his soul with the weight of many years, to dream that for him it is too late to turn and follow the High God in his heart. In the exquisite message which the Spirit spoke to the Church of Ephesus, they who were so warmly praised for splendid toil and service, yet who stood reproved because in the conflict they had lost something of their first love, were warned to turn again and *do the old things once more*. Remember! Repent! Return! *Remember* from whence thou art fallen—the heights and the raptures, the devotion and passion, of the years that are fled. *Repent*—of the coldness which has crept over your soul, of the man you are compared with, the man you were and the man you meant to be. Return—to the old deeds, the old service, the old thoughts and feelings; to your Bible and your secret prayer and your daily communion with the Highest; to God, whose arm is not shortened, whose ear is not stopped; to Christ, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. “Bring ye now the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”



XII

THE THREE JOHNS IN JOHN:
THE THREE THOMASES IN THOMAS

God be thanked, the meanest of His creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

—ROBERT BROWNING.

XII

THE THREE JOHNS IN JOHN: THE THREE THOMASES IN THOMAS

"For now we see through a mirror, darkly; but then face to face."—I. CORINTHIANS XIII. 12.

"It is not easy, at the best, for two persons talking together to make the most of each other's thoughts, there are so many of them."

This was a remark made by the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table to the assembled guests. And the company looked as if they wanted an explanation. So the Autocrat went on:

"When John and Thomas, for instance, are talking together, it is natural that among the six there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension."

The people thought that the Autocrat had suddenly gone mad. The landlady turned pale. The old gentleman opposite thought that the Autocrat might seize the carving knife. But he proceeded to explain that at the fewest six personalities are distinctly to be recognised as taking part in the dialogue between John and Thomas. There is (1) the real John, known only to his Maker; (2) John's ideal John, never the real one, and often very unlike him; (3) Thomas's ideal John, never the real John, nor John's John; but

often very unlike either. In precisely the same way there are three Thomases. There is Thomas as he really is, as God sees him; Thomas as he thinks he is; and Thomas as John thinks he is. In all, there are six people. No wonder two disputants often get angry when there are six of them talking and listening at the same time!

This is expressed with the inimitable playfulness of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but it is charged with deep wisdom and true religion. I understand it as a commentary on my text, "Now we see through a mirror, darkly."

This text has been thought to point a contrast between our ignorance here and our knowledge hereafter. In this life we see spiritual realities dimly; in the life to come we shall see them clearly. We have said that "the Gospel is a mirror showing us as in a *camera obscura*, but imperfectly, the things of eternity"; yet, "we shall stand before God, and look upon His face; and, seeing Him, we shall see all things." * And, again, "the face to which ours will be turned is God's."† All true enough and helpful, without a doubt; but is it not a little strange that the apostle should make such a wonderful transition from his theme, Charity, to this clear vision of eternity? Why, the strange thing is that it has not seemed strange to us. Consider what Paul has been saying.

This chapter is the glorious hymn of love. The religious fervour, the intellectual conquests, the

* Beet: "Corinthians."

† Findlay: Expositor's Greek Testament; "Corinthians."

accumulated philosophy of succeeding centuries, have produced nothing nobler than this. You cannot "praise" this perfect utterance. You might as well "approve" the perpetual rainbow over the Fluela Fall or the after-glow in an Alpine sky. The apostle exhausts the resources of inspired eloquence in exposition of Charity. And he looks for the maturing, the completion, the perfection, of this Christian grace. When such full-blossomed Charity has come, we shall see with perfect clearness. In proportion as it comes, we shall see better. When Charity has her perfect work, we shall see so distinctly that the vision may be said to be "face to face." Yes; that we have always understood. But what is it that we shall see? What but the object of our charity—our fellow-man? Towards whom have you exercised charity? Your brother-man, your neighbour, your friend, your rival, your foe. Then, as your Charity deepens, your vision of him will clear. As you think more charitably of him you will understand him better. When Charity towards him is perfected, you will see him face to face.

The phrase, "through a glass, darkly," of the Authorized Version has given place to "through a mirror, darkly" in the Revised. The art of silvering glass was not known for twelve hundred years after the apostle's time. The mirrors for which Corinth was famous—you remember Macaulay's line about the great Roman ladies, "who in Corinthian mirrors their own proud smiles behold"—round plates of burnished metal, were

poor reflectors. We see our brother-man darkly, as though reflected in a Corinthian mirror. "Enigmatically" we see him. The word translated "darkly" is our word for enigma. As near as possible, we have taken over the Greek word, Greek spelling, Greek pronunciation, into our own tongue. The margin of the Revised Version suggests, "in a riddle." Our neighbour is a riddle to us. Each one of us is an enigma to all others. And since there are at the fewest three Johns in John and three Thomases in Thomas, no wonder that there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension! When two people are together, there are six talking. John sees himself reflected in the mirror of his own egotism, and Thomas sees John in the mirror of his distrust; Thomas sees himself reflected in the mirror of his ideals, and John sees Thomas in the mirror of his disdain. But when that which is perfect is come, these four shall be done away. And the real John, as God sees him, and the real Thomas, as God sees him, shall see each other face to face, and each shall know as each is known.

This thought of the secret life in man is very impressive. Let us linger a little while and talk about it, before we hurry on to the lesson which it teaches. How it redeems our life from commonplace! * A writer from whom we expected much delighted us some years ago by a brilliant essay on "Life in Inverted Commas." † He repre-

* Cf. "The Veiled Life in Man" in Dr. Brook Herford's "Small End of Great Problems."

† Richard Le Gallienne: "Prose Fancies."

sented himself as watching from the top of an omnibus in Fleet Street the capture of a notorious plagiarist by detectives in the employ of the Incorporated Society of Authors, who led him away secured between strong inverted commas. This set him thinking. And he looked round at his companions in the 'bus. "There was the young dandy just let loose from his band-box, wearing exactly the same face, the same smile, the same necktie, holding his stick in exactly the same fashion, talking exactly the same words, with precisely the same accent, as his neighbour, another dandy, and as all the other dandies between the Bank and Hyde Park Corner. Looking at these examples of Nature's love of repeating herself," he goes on, "I said to myself: Somewhere in heaven stands a great stencil, and at each sweep of the cosmic brush a million dandies are born, each one alike as a box of collars. Indeed, I felt that this stencil process had been employed in the manufacture of every single person in the omnibus: two middle-aged matrons, each of whom seemed to think that having given birth to six children was an indisputable claim to originality; two elderly business men to correspond; a young miss, carrying music and wearing eye-glasses; and a clergyman discussing stocks with one of the business men; I alone in my corner being, of course, the one occupant for whom Nature had been at the expense of casting a special mould, and at the extravagance of breaking it!" To be sure! "*I, myself,*" am the original one. And

each one of us is an "*I, myself!*" Each is a microcosm—a world in himself. Our surroundings are unpicturesque. Our appearance is colourless. We shroud our individuality in the greys and drabs of the uninteresting and unconvincing. We are mere quotations of one another, and we ought to feel ashamed to be seen without our inverted commas—until the eye of genius pierces the thin veil of drab or grey, and the true life is seen, where the heart pours the hot blood into the brain, and the grey and white matter there reddens with the lava-tides and flings back this life in emotion, anguish, passion, prayer, love, hate, sin, tragedy—all the unloosed tempests of a shoreless sea. The "elderly business man," with his frock-coat and his watch chain—do you see him, the man, or only the clothes of flesh and blood he wears? All the hate of all the hells that raged in Othello's breast are chained and curbed beneath that frock-coat. The clergyman who is "discussing stocks," amiable and devout when need be and decorously worldly when occasion demands, do you really see him? Scorching his very soul is the scarlet letter which burned into Arthur Dimmesdale's flesh. That young dandy, with his smile and his necktie and his stick—is that all you see of him? But "the puppies fight well," said Wellington of the grandfather of this very dandy when in white gloves and dancing shoes he rushed to his death at Waterloo; and the brother of this dandy died on Spion Kop; and by the grace of God this one, in spite of his necktie, his

stick, and his smile, shall yet give his life to a righteous cause, and make us think Lloyd Garrison or Henry Drummond has come to life again! Those two matrons have been as the "miss" carrying her music, and the "miss," with her music and her eye-glasses, pray God she be as they, for with Juliet's trusting soul she has only Ophelia's flighty brain, while God's world is richer to-day because these two middle-aged matrons have been the mothers of fair women and brave men.

This hidden life, I must keep on repeating, is the real life. In our human nature, too, it is the unseen which is the real. That which is seen is temporal, but that which is not seen is eternal. It is not the true John who thinks he talks with Thomas, nor the true John whom Thomas thinks he hears. The true John is John as neither John nor Thomas sees him—as God alone can see him.

Deliberately we hide ourselves from our fellows. And for one man who hides himself for a base reason, a hundred hide from motives just and honourable. There are decent and modest reticences of the soul which have become part and parcel of our highest life. So true is this, that a departure from them may almost be regarded as pathological—calling for the good offices of one who can minister to a soul diseased. It is a shallow stream indeed in which one can see to the bottom at the first glance. In the normal person, in the sane person, more and more marvellously in robust personalities, are depths deeper than ever plummet sounded. We should not like to make friends with

a man who struck twelve the first time. We should turn away with contempt from a man who was more like plate-glass than a Corinthian mirror—if there was such a man, for I have never seen him. Disease is ugly, and except in the most unmanly of us there is manliness enough to make us seek to hide it. Pain, fear, defeat, are humiliating, and we keep them to ourselves. I have always known this; and always reckoned these things amongst the adorable simplicities and commonplaces of our human nature. But I never saw so much of it as during the year which I spent in a sanatorium. How we all hid our pain, our defeat, our humiliation, our heart-break, the bitterness of hope deferred, and the ever-gnawing misery which grows with the realisation of a wrecked career, a cramped and limited life! How we joked about our illness, made fun of all our losses, chaffed each other about our own defeats, made puns in every European language, and shook the mountain heights with our absurdities! And at last, when the comedy could be no longer played, and the shadows lengthened toward the night, we rang down the curtain on the tragedy, and when we raised it again it was for broad farce. God and Myself: between these two the true man owned his weakness; for all the world besides there was at least the decent show of strength. "Uniforms," said the Duke of Wellington, "are often masks."

We are timorous about our hopes and young ambitions. We cannot talk about them, not if they are genuine and born of a genuinely aspiring

soul. Do you think that we are going to wear our heart upon our sleeve for daws to peck at? Shall we bring out our hopes before the gaze of a world in too big a hurry to be sympathetic? We have borne them in pain. We nurse them in delightful anguish. We shall not expose them to the chilling sneer of men who have forgotten that ever they were young. And our hopes yet deeper, and still solemn ambitions, our yearning spirituality, our unspoken prayers, the quivering faith that in the silence and loneliness looks up to God—we cannot speak of these. They are too sacred for much speech.

And what of our sins? Better keep them to yourself as well. They, too, are between you and God. Let your confession be made unto Him. Jesus Christ is the one Priest who can never fail you. We lose sometimes, but not greatly, in repudiating the confessional. And Protestantism has been wise in rejecting it. Quite apart from its abuses, if we could have whatever good there is in it without its mischief, we are better off without it. Protestantism develops the manhood and womanhood within us, breeds strong, sane natures who need no intermediary between themselves and Christ, whose strong, deep life is hidden with Christ in God.

So, in a word, in one way or another, every brave man, every brave woman, must some time play a part. The smiles we put on just to cover our tears are the blessed hypocrisies of life which God approves; while the tears which never flow,

which we forbid to flow, are precious in His sight for ever.

And if this is true, if only part of this is true, how enigmatic, at any time, under any circumstance, must be the life of one man to another! Yet we should lose the apostle's view if we did not go on to say that for lack of charity we understand each other even less than we might, even less than we ought, and that needless confusion and pain result. The concealments of which we have spoken are dictated by love. The misunderstandings, misrepresentations, all the exasperation and bitterness of which we have yet to speak, which poison life and make men seem odious to one another, are all caused by want of love. When charity has her perfect work these shall be done away.

The elementary antagonisms of life are very curious. You are making a call on a friend, and some other person calls, and you wonder what he has come for! In the world of thought you decidedly object to some other person pretending to know anything about that which is really your own subject, while I have known men who would gladly have lain down their lives to advance a good cause who have nevertheless felt quite hurt because someone else has come into the work. In the world of business—but I am not competent to speak of that! I understand that if a man starts business in the same line as yourself, in the same street—but there ought to be a law against it! When these elementary antagonisms are

sharpened by personal feeling, when rivalries and jealousies and selfishness and fear lend bitterness to them, when dislike deepens into hate, then we see nothing, absolutely nothing, that is good in each other. We cannot be fair. We cannot be truthful. We misquote, misrepresent, distort, malign—and tell the most frightful lies, of which we ourselves all the while devoutly believe every word. This is why Paul says that charity seeketh not her own, is not so set upon selfish ends as to be blind to the virtues and graces which are indisputably to be found in the heart of every one of us.

And this is only one suggestion. Our want of charity still further obscures the mirror—which never was a good reflector, and we make it worse. We find rudeness where there is nothing but awkwardness, shyness, want of experience. We do not really hurt each other because we want to. It is awkwardness, stupidity, not deliberate rudeness. The worst that you can say of the “insufferable” person is that his manners have not that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. Yet his impulsive, generous heart may be more than a compensation, and—maybe you have breathed on the mirror.

We find offence, insult, where there is nothing but tremendous earnestness. If you want an illustration, you may find it in the recollections which General Booth’s motor-tour evokes. Carry your minds back to the time when mayors and corporations did not turn out to bid him welcome to their

towns, when train-oil and bags of soot were his portion. The week after his "Darkest England" was published I attended a meeting of preachers and philanthropists called to discuss it. Speaker after speaker raged furiously against General Booth because he had ignored every worker except himself, had "posed" as the only man in England who cared about these people or had thought of helping them. But now, looking back over nearly fourteen years, do you really think that General Booth deliberately left all other noble-hearted workers out of account, meaning to ignore and insult them? Does anybody believe it? Do the men who raged in their soreness that afternoon? You know that they do not. You know, and they know, that General Booth was too much "in haste for the kingdom of heaven," too anxious about the tremendous hopes that were surging up in his generous soul, to give a thought to the need for compiling a tabulated statement of the good work done by all the sweet-natured men and women of Great Britain. "It would have been more charitable if he had done so!" To be sure! And more charitable of us all, if when we found that he had not, we had assumed that he would have done if he had thought about it. Now we see in a mirror, darkly; when our charitable thoughts run clearer, we shall see face to face.

And worse than all this, it is our cruel want of charity which makes it possible for us to ascribe vile motives for acts which are passably good, to endorse the thievish suggestion that the philan-

thropist has "an axe to grind," and the Satanic sneer that Job doth not "serve God for naught." How little does John see of Thomas and Thomas of John when each bends his eyes to the ground, digging in the dirt for the motive of his brother's act!

Let us try to imagine the real man whom the mirror so badly reflects. We want to see the real John, as God sees him. It is an exercise of charity to try to picture what he is like. You see the sin which he has committed. My brother, I will tell you something you have not seen—I will tell you of a hundred things you have not begun to see: the sins which he did not commit! Anger, passion, hate, lust, gripped him, swayed him, shook him, but a hundred times he struggled, a hundred times he flung his foes, a hundred times he trampled base desire beneath his feet. Oh, but it was grand, the struggle and the conquest! You saw him mastered once; you did not see him breathless but triumphant, white and bloodless and shaken in every nerve, but victorious over baffling foes a hundred times. No; but God saw him; and it is God who bids him say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me." It is God who hears his cry,

Lord, for the erring thought
Not into evil wrought;
Lord, for the wicked will
Betrayed and baffled still;
For the heart from itself kept,
Our thanksgiving accept!

We do not see the virtues, the patient goodness, the uncomplaining courage, the heroic achievements. Shall I repeat again, the hidden man is the real man; the best part of the man is the man you do not see? Goethe is reported to have said, "There is something in every man's heart which if you only knew it would make you hate him." It may be true, but this I know is true, that in many a secret life there is something which if you only knew it would make you want to fall down on your knees and worship! Hateful or worshipful in the sight of man, God sees us as we are! Is that heaven or hell? God knows you as you do not know yourself; sees you in your naked soul. Must not that be hell? Unrepentant, selfish, sowing to the flesh, loving hate and hating love, and with God's keen, searching gaze looking on every secret deed and every hidden thought—yes, that is, and that ought to be a veritable hell! Loathing the sins that once we cherished, seeking the purest and loving the highest, lifting our hearts to Him and praying His mercy—not hell, but heaven, the heaven of heavens of a Father's great compassion! To this conclusion come at last the most spiritual of seers and sages:

Like as a father pitieth his children,
 So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.
 For He knoweth our frame,
 He remembereth that we are dust.

To this conclusion comes at last our trembling faith, and, coming, finds the shifting sand beneath

our feet as stable as the Rock of Ages. Did we think that we should dread His justice, and with burning tears appeal from it unto His love? Nay, but His justice is the gladdest thing Creation can behold. He who made us, 'tis He shall judge us. He who hath loved us, He loves us to the end.



XIII

THE SERPENT AND THE ROD

They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time.

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe,
Like glories, move his course and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

—TENNYSON.

XIII

THE SERPENT AND THE ROD

"And Moses put forth his hand, and laid hold of the serpent, and it became a rod in his hand."—Exodus iv. 5.

He put forth his hand, and the serpent, dangerous, destructive, deadly, became a rod, a stay, a support, a defence. In the hand of a strong man the pernicious thing became beneficent.

We need not stay to consider what fact, if any, lies behind this incident. Oriental magic has little interest. I find in the text the illustration of an eternal truth, that a man may put forth his hand, grasp the deadly thing, and find it stiffen into a good, useful instrument of progress. Touched by the alchemy of heaven, the poisonous things of earth discharge a ministry of healing, as, in the hands of modern chemists, the refuse of coal-tar gives off a world of colour. This is God's way in Nature. It is God's way in history. It is the way of commanding spirits amongst men in the face of adversity, sorrow, and pain. It may be the way of a man who has sinned. The output of human energy gathers to itself an energy Divine; man links himself with God, and binds his feebleness to Almighty power.

This is God's way in Nature. The supremely

destructive forces of the universe are amongst the supremely great and supremely blessed of the educative agencies of life. Man has entered into conflict with them, and contending with them has grown strong and wise. Henry Drummond, in his own delightful, unapproachable way, introduces us to an unevolved savage on an undeveloped earth, sprawling in the sun and with no desire to do anything but sprawl and be happy. Nature around him is silent, inert, invisible—so you might think. But in reality he is the victim of a conspiracy. Nature has designs upon him. She means to make him move on. She wishes to make him move because movement is work, work is exercise, and exercise may be evolution. First of all, Nature sets about moving him by moving herself. The earth moves, and the sun is far away in the west, and he must either get up or freeze. Twilight falls, and wild animals come from their lair, and he must either move or be eaten. The food he ate in the morning has dissolved and moved away to nourish the cells of the body, and more food must be moved into him to replenish the waste of tissue or he must starve. So he starts up, works, seeks food, shelter, safety. These movements make marks in the body, brace muscles, stimulate nerves, quicken intelligence, create habits, and he becomes more able and more willing to repeat them, and so becomes a higher, stronger man. Multiply these movements and you multiply him. Make him do things he never did be-

fore, and he will become what he never was before. The earth moves till the sun is far away, and winter snows begin. He again must either move, and move very fast, to find the sun, or he must chase, and also very fast, some thick-furred animal, kill it, and clothe himself with its skin. So he becomes a hunter. As a hunter he needs weapons. To throw a stone at an animal was good; to make a cunning instrument which would throw the stone twice as far in half the time was better. To strike or thrust with the torn branch of a tree was good, to sharpen the end of it and throw it as an assegai, or make an instrument that would throw it, as an arrow, was still more to his purpose. So you have tools and the man! So you have arms and the man!* In precisely this way you may trace man's progress in mechanical arts, in construction, in all the great arts, up to the day when he rears cathedrals, builds ocean liners, invents wireless telegraphy. Where Nature is prodigal of her bounty, where a suit of clothes grows on every tree and a dinner is found under every bush, the animal man slumbers and sleeps. Where Nature enters into conflict with man, bids him try conclusions with this old earth, its storms and seas, surrounds him with hardship and hazard, he finds himself. He puts forth his hand and the serpent becomes a rod.

But these forces of Nature have their terrors. They crush, maim, blind, burn, destroy, overwhelm, appal. And so man becomes not only a

* "The Ascent of Man," chapter vi.

stronger and a cunninger man, but a better man. He is educated by adversity; and his heart is educated not less than his head. He learns pity. He enters into compassion. He develops philanthropy. The shipwreck launches the lifeboat. The physician is bred of the pestilence. Living men in our port hasten to die, that dying men, across the Bar, may live. The plague is stopped, because the bacteriologist has lived and loved and died.

And Death itself, which has seemed to men the greatest Terror of all, which has flung a shadow over every path, has touched all lives with light. Consciously or unconsciously, working through the thought of the individual or through the mind of the race, the sense of death has brought meaning, solicitude, yearning, into our deepest and purest affections. Whether we know it or not, it is the reality of death which has brought into our lives grandeur and immensity. Through death has God set eternity in our hearts.* He puts forth His hand, and the serpent becomes a rod.

And this is God's way in history. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart. The

* See the splendid chapter in Fairbairn's "Philosophy of the Christian Religion," "The question as affected by the problem of evil," sections, "Man in the hands of Nature," and "Evils peculiar to man."

fashionable madness of the Middle Ages, what we call the Crusades, brought the nations together, woke Europe from its sleep, opened the way for arts, commerce, and learning. The triumph of the Turks, the fall of Constantinople into their hands, drove the Greeks of the east westward. The love of learning revived, as Greek language and literature were studied; men turned to the New Testament in its original tongue: it was the *Renaissance*—the new birth of the nations, the intellectual side of that movement whose moral side was the Protestant Reformation. Tyrannies and persecutions in England and Scotland drove their victims to Frankfort, Geneva, Leyden, the free cities of the Continent. There they breathed the air of liberty, came back to break the bands of oppression here and let the oppressed go free, crossed the broad Atlantic to lay the foundations of the great Republic of the West. Can you think of anything more alien from the mind of the Master than the malignity of persecuting orthodoxy? The spirit that hates for the love of God and “from the tombs of the old prophets steals the funeral lamps away, to light up the martyr fagots round the prophets of to-day”? You cannot. But consider again: Do you know anything which has better served the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world than this same persecuting orthodoxy? Persecution scattered believers throughout the nations, sent them to preach the Gospel where they would never have gone. It cut them off

from dependence upon material things, robbed them of the comforts and luxuries of life whose possession makes us timorous of change, fearful of violence and loss. Living, the persecuted were braced for determined conflict. We love that for which we have suffered. Easy come, easy go—in morals as in material things. There is something in our human nature which urges us to speak the truth which we are forbidden to speak on pain of chains or death. And dying, the persecuted were visibly placarded before all men's eyes as men with a message, men with a purpose, men with a spirit, men who had, beyond all dispute, found somewhere strength which brought heaven down to earth and changed agony to immortal joy.

So true is this, as a principle and as illustrated in every century, that when the not-wise young man went to Talleyrand and asked for his advice as to the propagation of a new religion which he had just invented, asking the world-weary man what he must do to get his new religion accepted amongst men, Talleyrand looked at him and said, "I should advise you to arrange to have yourself crucified!" To be sure! He could not have done better. It is the Cross which makes Calvary the highest mountain on the globe. God pours Himself as redemptive energy into the hearts of men. He puts forth His hand, and the serpent becomes a rod.

God's way in Nature, God's way in history, is God's way for each one of us in our own life.

Let us grasp the serpent that it may become a rod.

This is the story of all glorious conquest of adverse circumstance. Strolling along the bank of my native Trent, I have seen a parable—with rod and line in its hands! Some townsman, magnificently equipped, with outfit which must have cost a little fortune, which would have made Isaak Walton turn green with envy, flung his line in vain. The shadows of evening fell and his face lengthened, and there was never a fish in his creel. And beside him a ragged rascal of a village schoolboy, playing truant, with his bare feet and unwashed hands, with his home-made rod, and two-penny line, and penny float, and halfpenny tackle—swinging out the roach and dace or greedy perch at almost every swim. “These things are written allegorically!” *It is not the costliest outfit which takes the biggest fish.* Cardinal Wolsey, Daniel De Foe, and Henry Kirke White—it would be impossible to name in a breath three men more utterly unlike each other—were all the sons of butchers. Jeremy Taylor, one of the greatest of English preachers, Richard Arkwright, the real founder of our cotton industries, and Turner, the painter, were all barbers. John Bunyan was a tinker. Robert Burns a ploughman. Ben Jonson a bricklayer. Livingstone was a weaver. Stanley a workhouse boy. Carey a cobbler. Copernicus was the son of a baker. Kepler came from a German inn. Whitefield was a barman at the

"Bell Tavern" in Gloucester. Haydn was a wheelwright. Hildebrand a village carpenter. George Stephenson was an engine-fireman, and taught himself arithmetic on the side of colliery waggons. Wilkie learned art with a piece of chalk and a barn door. West made his first brushes out of the cat's tail. Watt constructed his first model out of an old syringe. Humphry Davy extemporised his scientific appliances from kitchen pots and pans; and Faraday his from glass bottles. Elihu Burritt mastered eighteen ancient and modern languages while earning his living as a blacksmith!

Why, you would really think that it was an advantage to have no advantages at all! As you contemplate the victories of initiative, of enterprise, of industry over "those twin gaolers of the daring heart, low birth and iron fortune," you begin to think that you have found the royal road to prosperity, that it consists in being poor, handicapped, without money, friends, or influence, with willing hands, strong brain, and determined will to seize the serpent and turn it into a rod! These adverse circumstances, what are they but a call to perseverance, concentration, devotion, courage, self-mastery—all the plain, heroic virtues out of which are fashioned the "great lever souls, who lift the world, and roll it in another course"?

And this is the Gospel of Sorrow, which I pass over this morning with this bare word, to come back to it another day, for I know how good it

is, and show once more how we may distil the honey-sweetness of sympathy, goodness, and gladness in God from the serpent-poison of a bitter grief.

I turn to what seems to me a very fruitful and helpful suggestion, growing out of this text. Modern science speaks of the persistence of energy with the conversion of force. The August evening is charged with storm; the sky is threatening and yellow. From the impact of great cloud masses leaps a force as light; it runs down the lightning conductor as electricity; it melts it as heat; it crashes through the solid masonry as motion. The original energy persists; the force has been more than once converted. The apostle says that we are "the children of wrath." By that he does not mean that we are born the inheritors of the anger of an implacable deity. He means that we are wrathful children, creatures of wild impulse, savage desires, turbulent passions. There are forces and fires within us, ready to leap forth in white heat of anger, kindling hate, or fiery lusts of the flesh. Amongst these volcanic natures, with their burning passions, the children of genius have been often found, so often, indeed, that men have taught as a doctrine the belief that you cannot have genius without the fierce fires of passion by which it is fed, and that to ask the man of genius to conform to the conventions of morality by which our common clay is bound is to commit the worst of intellectual blunders, is to be guilty

of a contradiction in terms. The saintly lives of a hundred men of genius, who have at once obeyed and glorified the laws of Christian life, challenge this assertion. And the truth is that these forces and fires, of which I have spoken, by which hatreds, passions, lusts are too often nourished, may really feed the high impulses of the soul which give us prophets, apostles, saints, missionaries, martyrs, the aristocracy of the heart, the hierarchy of redemption. It is the persistence of energy with the conversion of force, the energy of passion converted into a force that makes for righteousness and salvation.

If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than
their own,

I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be
mute?

No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the
throne,

Hold the sceptre, human soul, and rule thy province of
the brute.

Yet what if we have failed? If the brute has broken leash, and raged in his brutal way? If the human soul has not held the sceptre, has been subject to the vassal instincts which have dragged it from the throne? If we have sinned, and our sin is triumphant over us? If the serpent has uncoiled, has poised, has stung, and the deadly virus of accomplished iniquity is coursing through our veins: does this Gospel still hold good? It does hold good. It is here that its most glorious victories have been won. The

destructive energy of completed sin is converted by forgiveness into the force of a gracious and fruitful life.

What is forgiveness? It is not miraculous deliverance from the consequence of sin, not remission of penalty. This is what people look for. Perhaps it is what we have taught them to expect. The Gospel does not offer it. The Bible does not promise it. It is the sin which must be blotted out, not the penalty. God could not take the penalty out of life while the sin remained. A liar may repent of his untruthfulness; but the penalty remains in a reputation which no man can trust. The drunken debauch, repented the next morning, brings a headache, and a life of drunken debauch, repented at last, leaves the wrecked body and poisoned brain. A man may repent his dishonesty, but the prison waits for him. Sin, which no man knows but the sinner, entails its consequences, and the consequences must be met. What is forgiveness, and what can the Gospel do?

Divine forgiveness is God's touch upon these old destructive energies of guilt, converting them into a force which builds up and purifies and renews. This force sets up new recuperative processes, accumulates moral assets which outpay the deficits of guilt, and in time enrich the life as it was never rich before. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

A man falls into evil courses. It is the old story, drink and dissipation. Little by little

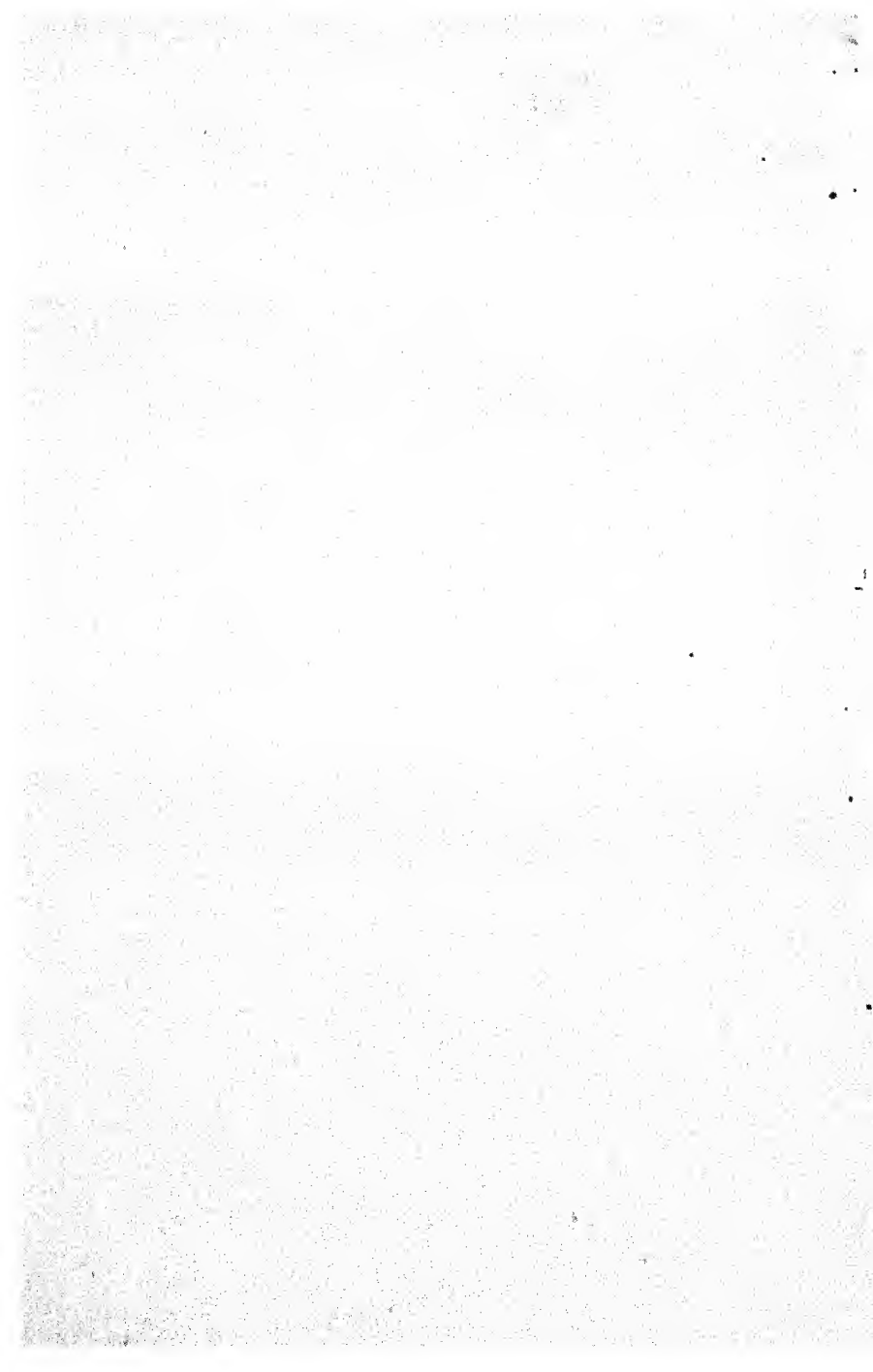
his business dwindles away; friends fall from him; his home is broken up. He is a wreck. One day, when the devil enters into him with the poisoned drink, he strikes his wife and does her a lasting injury. And then he sees himself as he is, repents his self-indulgence, his vice, his cruelty. He calls upon his soul and all that is within him; he rises; he is free! Yes, but he cannot walk down to his office to-morrow morning and find a flourishing business as though nothing had happened during all these years. He is repentant, and he has found forgiveness. True; but the home that has been broken up will not be brought through the air and opened for his reception like Aladdin's palace. And the injury which he has done his wife, that abides. What is forgiveness? The touch of God's hand upon these energies of his nature, converting them to deep resolve, growing self-control, industry, sacrifice, affection, devotion. In time these shall accumulate their moral assets. He cannot bring back the years that are fled. But in time he shall acquire a greater business. He shall build a happier home. And his wife, though the scar is in her flesh and will never pass away, in the infinite goodness of a woman's love, which saves, and shelters, and redeems us men, and is like the infinite mercy of God—his wife, for the conquest of his evil passions and his rise to moral grandeur, shall love him more tenderly than before, and the last years of their life shall be their best years, opening still better in the land where the years shall cease.

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This is the gospel for us. O men who have sinned, and come short of the promise of your manhood; women, who have come short of the beauty of your girlhood; my fellow-sinners, who have sinned and come short of the glory of God—put forth your hand, and the serpent shall become a rod! It is easy to think ourselves into a fatalistic fog, to believe that we are so conditioned and bound by past weaknesses, by irrecoverable yieldings, or by cruel circumstances, that there is nothing for us but to drift. The answer to it is in *fact*. *Assert yourself! You can.* We can think ourselves into incompetence, dream ourselves into helplessness, go “mooning,” into moral imbecility, until we give ourselves a great mental and moral shake, and fling these flimsy fetters from our emancipated soul. We have never exploited all the resources of human nature. We have never called up the reserves of strength, hope, courage, purpose which wait our call. Neither feeble health, nor cramping poverty, nor crushing sorrow, nor accomplished sin, nor evil habits, shall paralyse the aspirations of your essential manhood, nor quench its immortality.

All the Powers that soon or late
Gain for man some sacred goal,
Are co-partners in thy fate,
Are companions of thy soul;
Unto thee all earth shall bow;
These are Heaven and these are thou.

Put forth your hand, my brother, and the serpent
shall become a rod!



XIV

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE UNIVERSE

The world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

—ROBERT BROWNING.

XIV

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE UNIVERSE

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

—MATTHEW XI. 30.

"LINED with love," is the quaint phrase with which Matthew Henry describes the "easy" yoke of Christ. The yoke is that which binds us to service and compels our labour. In this work-a-day world of ours the yoke too often galls us. We strain. We toil. We wince. But the yoke which binds us to the service of Christ is easy to bear; as the Greek word suggests, "the part on which it presses takes *kindly* to it." Let organised strength, against our will and in spite of our protests, rivet a yoke upon us, and flesh and spirit cry out against it. But the yoke which we assume with willing hands, and fasten upon ourselves with glad, brave heart, may become a living glory. Does any man choose bonds when he might be free? But all men would so choose, if they knew the pure and perfect joy of surrender to a Master infallibly wise and incorruptibly pure. Slaves of Christ, we are the world's free men. His service is perfect liberty.

Christ calls to Himself all those who labour, who are weary of *doing*. He calls to Himself all who are heavy laden, who are exhausted by

suffering. He calls us, the labouring souls, who bear the burden and the heat, and groan beneath our task. He calls *us* to Himself. He calls us, the heavy laden, who sink beneath a load of sorrow and yet daily fear some fresh disaster, He calls *us* to His side. He bids us take fresh yoke of service, bind ourselves to tasks of endless labour, and bear with Him the burden of the sins and sorrows of the race! He makes no offer to relieve us of our burden. No; but He asserts that He will increase it! Yet He promises that if we come to Him, we shall find rest "unto our souls"—a peace, and calm, and rest of spirit, in whose strength we may carry the burden of our world.

The gracious promise of our Lord ends with the assertion of my text. The experience of men and women of every race, of every condition, of every type and temperament, of all ages, under all known and conceivable conditions, rich and poor, refined and illiterate, wise and simple, affirms the reality of this fact sublime. The proof of Christianity is in itself. If men would know whether Christianity is true, let them try it. Let them taste and see how gracious the Lord is. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

It is said that Margaret Fuller was in the habit of exclaiming, in her exaggerated, ridiculous way, "I accept the universe." When this was told to Thomas Carlyle, the old man said sardonically, "Gad! she'd better!" Professor

James, of Harvard, who tells this story,* adds that "at bottom the whole concern of morality and religion is with the manner of our acceptance of the universe." And he goes no. "Do we accept it only in part and grudgingly, or heartily and altogether? Shall our protests against certain things in it be radical and unforgiving, or shall we think that, even with evil, there are ways of living which must lead to good? If we accept the whole, shall we do so as if stunned into submission—as Carlyle would have us—'Gad! we'd better'—or shall we do so with enthusiastic assent?"

But before we plunge deeper into the discussion of the manner of our acceptance of the universe, let me remind you that, absurd as it sounds to put it in this way, innumerable lives are lived all about us in daily and hourly refusal to "accept the universe."

How many of you remember Byron's "Lucifer"—the atheist lecturer whom the poet dressed up as his satanic hero? His words are striking, when he talks about

Souls who dare use their immortality—
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face, and tell Him that
His evil is not good!

We all pass through a Byron phase—even those of us who have not read a line of Byron, to our knowledge, in all our life. When the Byron mood through which we pass synchronises with our first

* "The Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 41.

knowledge of the poet, we think that Byron has said some of the truest, strongest, realest things ever said by mortal! The Byron mood is the mood of revolt—revolt against everything, man and God, ourselves and the course and constitution of nature, the past, the present, and the future. And in essence Carlyle's advice. "Close your Byron, open your Goethe," is an exhortation to cease from this attitude of revolt and to "accept the universe."

There are times when we rage against the inevitability of things. It seems to us cruel beyond words. Our rage against it transcends all bounds. Our rebellion is speechless. So small a thing affects the current of all our life. One false note jars the music of the spheres. It was such a beggarly, such a miserable trifle, a something, a breath, a nothing. It was a word, so idly spoken, a trivial act so carelessly flung into the deathless, never-ending whirl of human life. And this trifle, this something, this nothing, has produced results, which have become causes, which have set in motion other causes, which go working on, producing, creating, destroying—why, the very contemplation of it is maddening; to think that we cannot take back that paltry word, undo that miserable act, and silence the infernal discord which we have started with our one false note!

We fling ourselves with impotent passion against the injustice of life. There are senseless cruelties in Nature which arouse our horror. This old earth of ours makes mock of us. We are

the sport of the high gods who laugh at us. And down below, infinite strength is armed against unspeakable weakness; the puny child is in a giant's grip, and for the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, God does not arise!

We are impatient of the intolerable patience of God! Age by age, shrouded in His eternal invisibility, He watches the martyrdom of man, He looks down upon the sighs, the sorrows, and the tears of our sad world. So, in these dark moods, it seems to us; and, like William Watson, breaking his heart over the age-long torture of Armenia, we find God's patience to be a terrible test of our faith in Him:

What wonder if yon torn and naked throng
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,
And having moaned at noontide, "Lord, how long?"
Should cry, "Where hidest Thou?" at even-fall,
At midnight, "Is He deaf and blind, our God?"
And ere day dawn, "Is He indeed at all?"

Happy is the man who has closed his Byron and opened his Goethe? Happy is the man who, in calmer mood, with wider vision, has come to see in the inevitability of things against which he formerly raged, God's guarantee of stability, man's assurance of safety, in an ordered world. If there were no such "inevitability," if no man could be sure that vice to-day would not be virtue to-morrow, that in the moral world two and two would always make four; if no man could be certain that the retribution which waits on treachery, baseness, and dishonour would not

be adjudged the due recompense and reward of self-sacrifice, loyalty, and goodness—this world would be a Bedlam and all the men and women worse than mad. The mind reels at the thought of caprice enthroned above the world. And happy is that man, too, who has come to see how these slow processes of God, which once threatened to make shipwreck of his faith, are most God-like and beneficent; who sees that God is working everywhere, in the darkness, beyond the shadow, keeping watch above His own. Yes, happy the man who has closed his Byron and opened his Goethe! Happier he who has opened his John and his Paul; who feels that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; and that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God! And happiest of all, the man in whose heart abides the Comforter whom God promised by His Son Jesus to send, the man who still hears his Saviour whisper, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"!

So, then, the absurdity of the phrase notwithstanding, a preacher may yet exhort you, for your strength and comfort, "*Accept the Universe!*"

But now let us go back to the question, In what manner shall we accept the universe? There are two ways. There is the way of strong, stern, resigned submission. And there is the way of radiant gladness, love, and rapture.

Of the Stoic way, the way of proud submission, I am not likely to say one disrespectful word. Nay, I admire it intensely. Professor James has quoted some passages from Marcus Aurelius, which everybody must feel are admirable. And he has set against them, in fine contrast, rapt utterances from "The Imitation of Christ." But let me quote to you a favourite passage of my own from another Pagan saint, from Epictetus:

"My friends, wait upon God. When He Himself shall give you the signal and release you from this service, then are ye released unto Him. But for the present, bear to dwell in this place, wherein He has set you. Short, indeed, is this time of your sojourn, and easy to bear for those that are so minded. For what tyrant or what thief is there any longer, or what court of law is terrible to one who thus makes nothing of the body and the possessions of it? Remain, then, and depart not without a reason.

"But for how long are such injunctions to be obeyed? So long as it is profitable—that is to say, so long as I can do what becomes and befits me. . . . Doth it smoke in the chamber? if it is not very much I will stay, if too much I will go out; for remember this always, and hold fast to it; that the door is open. 'Thou shalt not live in Nicopolis.' Good; I will not. 'Nor in Athens.' I will not live in Athens. 'Nor in Rome.' Neither will I live in Rome. 'Live in Gyara.' But living in Gyara seemeth to me like

a great smoke. I will depart, whither no man shall hinder me to dwell—for that dwelling stands ever open to all.

“Only do it not unreasonably, nor in cowardly fashion, nor make every common chance an excuse. For again, it is not God’s will, for He hath need of such an order of things, and of such a race upon the earth. But if He give the signal for retreat, as He did to Socrates, we must obey Him as our commander.”

And one other, shorter passage from this Pagan saint:

“Remember that thou art an actor in a play of such a part as it may please the director to assign thee; of a short part if he choose a short part; of a long one if he choose a long. And if he will have thee take the part of a poor man, or a cripple, or a governor, or a private person, mayest thou act that part with grace! For thine it is to act well the allotted part, but to choose it is another’s.”

Let us add to these quotations one from a modern man who may not have been a Pagan, but who certainly was not a saint:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be,
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

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Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

Let me repeat that these utterances of Stoic resignation are not to be contemned. They are admirable—in default of something stronger still and sweeter, diviner and still human. Compare this beautiful utterance of a poor Methodist woman in the eighteenth century:

“I do not know when I have had happier times in my soul, than when I have been sitting at work with nothing before me but a candle and a white cloth, and hearing no sound but that of my own breath, with God in my soul and heaven in my eye. I rejoice in being exactly what I am,—a creature capable of loving God, and who, as long as God lives, must be very happy. I get up and look for a while out of the window, and gaze at the moon and stars, the work of an Almighty hand. I think of the grandeur of the universe, and then sit down and think myself one of the happiest beings in it.”

And this from a writer † whom few of you know:

“What inexpressible joy for me, to look up through the apple blossoms and the fluttering leaves and to see God’s love there; to listen to

* W. E. Henley.

† Elizabeth Charles.

the thrush that has built his nest among them, and to feel God's love, who cares for the birds, in every note that swells his little throat; to look beyond to the bright, blue depths of the sky, and feel they are a canopy of blessing—the roof of the house of my Father; that if clouds pass over it, it is the unchangeable light they veil; that, even when the day itself passes, I shall see that the night only unveils new worlds of light, and to know that if I could unwrap fold after fold of God's universe, I should only unfold more and more blessing and see deeper and deeper into the love which is at the heart of all."

And I need do no more than remind you of some of the best known hymns in our language, Frances Ridley Havergal's "Take my Life," let us say, or Adelaide Ann Proctor's "Our God, we thank Thee, who hast made the earth so bright," with its verse which so few of us are able to sing:

We thank Thee more that all our joy
Is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain;
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain.

In my college days these verses used to provoke beyond measure the great man who presided over our studies. He was never weary of flinging scorn on them and of ridiculing the people who "professed to be fond of them." In an expression which it is certain he would have denounced

in the logic class as "a prejudice-raising phrase," he used to warn us against the "exaggerated sentimentality which a lot of silly women write." These were limitations of his greatness; and it has needed deeper experience of life and actual acquaintance with living saints to make plain to me, at least, that this is real with the deepest reality which our human nature can know, that the bliss is real, the rapture real, that these are not passing moods, but the settled, abiding joy of exalted natures who have come to Him and learned of Him, and found His yoke easy and His burden light.

Let me ask you: Have we gained anything by our coldly critical outlook upon the religion of Jesus? It is ours to accept the universe, not with the Stoic strength of Epictetus nor the half-heroic, half brutal defiance of Henley, but with the pure joy of the follower of Jesus. And if in His Name and His Spirit we accept all, shall we not accept it with whole-hearted, glad welcome, that our joy may be full?

Perhaps we can bring this consideration nearer to the limits of the practical and unsentimental, if we consider the acceptance of something a little less than the universe. Let us consider each individual life, not in relation to the universe, but in relation to the social organism.

There are four possible attitudes: Self-assertion; Submission; Expediency; Self-sacrifice.

We may maintain an attitude of *Self-assertion*. This is conflict without glory. It is the brigand

spirit of any age. Whether amongst the mountain passes in the Middle Ages or on the Exchange to-day, unmitigated self-assertion is brigandage. Ruskin compares the Baron of the Craggs with the Baron of the Bags, very greatly to the disadvantage of our friend the Bag-baron. In the old day

They carved at the meal
With gloves of steel,
And they drank the red wine thro' the helmet barred.

In our day

The good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

There seems no mete nor bound which can be set to this incarnate egoism. And the end is always the same: "For love of self, his very self he slew." And the divine comment always is "Thou Fool!"

At the antipodes of Self-assertion is *Submission*. And this is slavery. This is the account of wrecked and broken lives which strew our path. Here are the men who have "gone under." They are objects of our pity, more than of our condemnation. They have submitted to circumstance, birth, environment, defects of will and taints of blood. They have submitted to the evil which first woos, then threatens, then kills. And submitting, when they should and could have conquered, they have passed to a deeper slavery, of vice, of lust, of sin, which seems to them in their degradation all that remains. It is sorrow drowned to bring new

sorrow. And the man who pities, loves, and fears, yet refuses to despair, looks, longs, and prays for the cleansing, saving fires of hell.

Between the extremes of Self-assertion and Submission is another possibility. It is *Expediency*. And this is death. Never yet was expediency the rule of life for man or nation. You cannot always know what is right. But you can oftener discover what is right than you can decide what is expedient. Life is played upon by so many currents and cross-currents, that it is impossible to calculate exactly the effect of any line of policy. But while God is God it is always right to do right. And there can be no world, no star, no universe, where it is not best to do right and leave the issue with God. Do that which is not *expedient*, and "it will be all the same a hundred years hence!" But do that which is not *right*, and eternity itself will be needed to make the balance level.

The one possibility which remains is *Self-sacrifice*. And this is life eternal. Life is conceived of as a sacred trust, to be employed as the great Giver directs. Such a conception completes and sublimates all the noble thoughts of the Pagan Saints. We are saved from self-assertion, for there is no self left. All is God's. Ambition, desire, will, we have offered to Him. Brain that plans and ponders, heart that yearns and aspires, time and all that we can crowd into our days, wealth and all that we possess—they are ours only on trust, to use them for His glory,

and we worship God by serving man. We are saved from submission to the lower impulses of our own life and the lower temptings of fallen men; for life is too high, too holy, too great, and solemn, and splendid to be spent on anything but the things of God. And from the satanic suggestions of expediency we turn with profound disdain:

'Tis man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die!

Brother, take the yoke of Jesus! It is a yoke, and you feel it so—at first. But it will fit kindly to the part on which it presses—soon; and His burden will be light. I think I know what lies behind the invitation of the street-preacher, "Come to Jesus! Come to Him now!" You are not invited to the acceptance of statements about Christ. You are not asked to give an intellectual assent to certain propositions concerning His nature, His work, or His kingdom. The condition of modern saintship is that you shall refer all the concerns of your life, the smallest, the grandest, to the Lord Christ. As though He were by your side, as though you could talk with Him, as though you could see the smile of His approval and hear the whisper of His "Well done," as though you felt the touch of His kind hand upon you when you shook with pain or trembled with fear or sank beneath your heavy load—felt His hand upon you and took heart of hope again—so refer your life to Him,

talk to Him—with words or without—of your troubles, your hopes, and your fears. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. He is our Peace. And with Him we overcome the world. It is a world of tumult and tempest, of temptation and trial, of fightings without and fears within, of conflict which no mortal can escape. It is a world in which strong men are beaten down and proud ones humbled, where human hearts are crushed and love lies bleeding, where Rachael mourns for her children and will not be comforted, because they are not. It is a world where God seems deaf to our crying and blind to our needs! Nay; but it is a world which God Himself has prepared for His children, a world into which we are cast, as into an alembic, to be cleansed, purified, saved by strife and suffering, by service and sacrifice; where God reigns in love, controls, guides, brings order out of chaos, light out of darkness, peace out of pain, and doeth all things well. It is a world which fits us for larger service with ampler powers in a grander universe, and for diviner joys which our enfranchised souls shall share with those who walk with God. Accept the universe! Accept it as God's, your Father's, and your own! Yours to enjoy

With a propriety which none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,
And smiling say, "My Father made it all!"

and we worship God by serving man. We are saved from submission to the lower impulses of our own life and the lower temptings of fallen men; for life is too high, too holy, too great, and solemn, and splendid to be spent on anything but the things of God. And from the satanic suggestions of expediency we turn with profound disdain:

'Tis man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die!

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